



# messing about in **BOATS**

Volume 27 – Number 10

February 2010

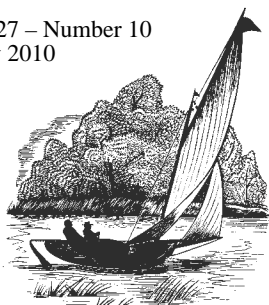
**Special Features This Issue**  
“East Coast Open Water Rowing Championships”  
“A Maine Yell on the Allagash”  
“The Land of the Cuckoos”  
“Why a Shanty Boat?”



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# Commentary...

Bob Hicks, Editor



Beginning in the spring of 2008 I began to reprint stories from Great Britain's Dinghy Cruising Association Bulletin. I no longer recall how this fascinating journal of small boat adventuring came to me initially, but I had been exchanging publications with the DCA for some time when I decided I wanted to share some of their stories with you. My contact was Joan Abrams, editor of the quarterly bulletin. We corresponded to arrange the permission for me to reprint a number of articles written by DCA members, Joan took care of obtaining the writers' permission, and I sent her two copies of each issue, one for her archives, the other for her to forward to the writer of each issue's DCA story.

It was a shock to me to learn in the Fall Bulletin that Joan had suddenly died. It seems she had injured her foot while working on her boat and chose to ignore the injury until it became serious enough of a problem for her to seek hospitalization. Initially her condition was not viewed as being too serious, but she suddenly took a turn for the worse and passed away. Joan was 82.

I'm sharing this with you as to me she represented the best in our small boating enthusiasm, not only enjoying her boats all her life, but also contributing to others' enjoyment with her efforts turning out the bulletin as a labor of love. Her efforts were summarized in the Winter Bulletin by DCA President Roger Barnes:

"Joan Abrams was there at the very beginning. To those of us who came later, the founders of the Dinghy Cruising Association can seem like giants. We are the pygmies who stand on their shoulders. The accounts of their voyages in the 1950s and early 1960s, sailing in simple boats with primitive camping gear, and written up in the crudely printed bulletins of those years, are like testaments of a more heroic age. Joan Abrams was one of the few who remained who remembered those early, heady days. She was one of the last of the giants, a dinghy cruising Shackleton.

I never went sailing with her, but I can remember reading with wonder about her voyages along the exposed Cumbrian coast in her old wooden dinghy, which inevitably involved a prodigious amount of rowing. When I finally met her I was amazed that this slim woman could have found the physical fortitude to undertake such ambitious passages.

To most of us Joan will be best remembered as the long serving editor of the Bulletin. Every issue was prefaced by a short introductory essay written by Joan herself. Always perceptive and thought-provoking, her pieces would illuminate some peculiar aspect of sailing, often wry and never hackneyed. This is the sort of writing that is hard to do well, but she made it seem effortless. Others less talented than she might struggle with their articles but Joan was proud that she never rejected anyone's submission to the Bulletin, instead she gently encouraged contributors to give of their best.

In later years Joan headed up a team of publishers, art editors, and the like but despite the flashy graphics and colour printing that we introduced, Joan remained as a constant calm presence at the helm of the Bulletin. Hence it continued to reflect her style, remaining always modest and unassuming, but immensely worthy and good-natured. She had strong opinions but never used her position to lay down the law. She was happy to find space for long discussions about what to do after your cruising dinghy cap-sizes, even though her own view was characteristically forthright, 'just don't do it!'

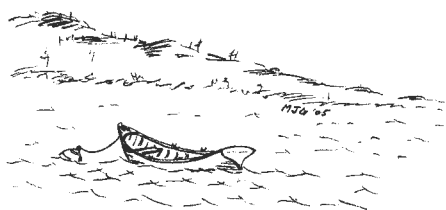
I always think that one of the nicest things about the Dinghy Cruising Association is that we know each other as sailors, first and foremost, and it rarely occurs to us to wonder what other members do in their lives outside of dinghy sailing. So Joan's other activities rarely impinged on our lives and she certainly would have thought it tasteless to include references to them in the Bulletin. Only the occasional appearance of a homemade CND badge on her breast at our Annual General Meetings gave some sign of the campaigns into which she threw herself with the same formidable enthusiasm as dinghy sailing.

Joan, we now have to find ways of coping without you. But whatever success we may have will be inspired by your memory and your example. Thank you for everything."

Joan Abrams and I were geographically far apart and thus never met, but we appear to have shared so much in our approach to life and our chosen enthusiasms that we were close indeed in spirit. I thus have chosen to pay tribute to her by sharing this all with you here.

## On the Cover...

The first East Coast Open Water Rowing Championship took place in late November hosted by Squish Rowing of Plymouth, Massachusetts. The day was quite a success and Pete Smith reports on the event in this issue, his story accompanied by the superb photos from Hilary Moll. More of her work can be viewed on her website, [www.hilarymoll.com](http://www.hilarymoll.com)



## From the Journals of Constant Waterman

By Matthew Goldman

Thursday evenings mean summer music at Esker Point in Noank, Connecticut. By five o'clock, the most convenient parking has been taken. The little park and beach fill up, the volleyball games get underway, and boats begin to raft up in the shallows. At low tide, people wade, chest deep, from boats anchored off the beach. If there were music on Fishers Island, people would likely try to wade across Fishers Island Sound.

As *MoonWind* draws 4', we don't consider bringing her here and opt to come via Whitehall pulling boat. A couple of seat cushions make for a pleasanter evening. From our dinghy dock it takes but ten minutes to row to Esker Point. The band can be heard all over the marina. Our Whitehall has a second rowing station forward; with someone in the stern sheets, the boat trims better when I row from the bow. I pull within a hundred feet of the beach, open my small folding grapnel anchor, and toss it over the side.

The music begins before we get underway. Tonight we have soul music ala The Miracles, The Temptations, and The Platters. A dark clad band and four vocalists, all men, fill the stage constructed on the beach. Even though the band and speakers face away from the water, the music, if not the lyrics, reaches us clearly. The joint, if that word applies to ten acres of beachfront, is definitely jumping.

Children frolic in the shallow water. A dad is teaching his two-year-old daughter the finer points of the crawl. A few small boats are drawn up on the beach. The younger set poses for one another. Tattoos and bikinis clamor for attention.

On anchored boats, the avid consumption of beer warrants consideration. Men and women swim or wade to the beach, raid the concession stand, then return to their boats. Some bring their beer ashore; here comes a fellow doing the backstroke, balancing a green bottle on his chest. Occasional swigs from this bottle fuel his progress. The more elite come ashore via rubber dinghy. The saxophone cries of unrequited love.

In the midst of all this, a 30' cabin cruiser approaches the shore, swings 180, and backs within a few yards of the beach. He passes 2' away from us, but appears a sober and competent sort of skipper. He backs his vessel in at half a knot. The woman on the foredeck lets go the Danforth, snubs it professionally at just the right moment, and they berth securely. A flux of people comes and goes over their swim platform.

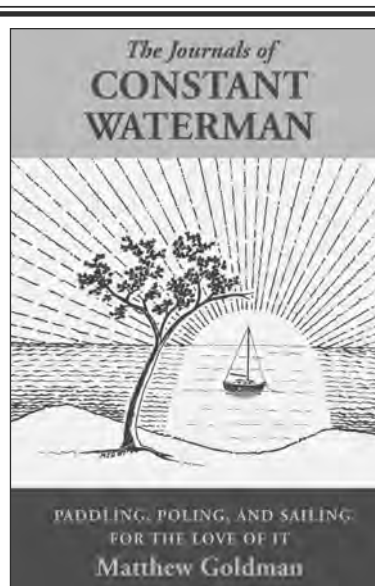
The four vocalists, in black and white checked jumpers, clap their hands above their heads and shout in time with the drummer. The soft air throbs.

Someone ashore blows soap bubbles that drift past us on the breeze. Laughing children in the shallows chase after them. The volleyball games continue without a break, and a roar goes up as someone spikes the ball. Two golden retrievers chase each other and splash in the shallow water. One of them has a much darker coat and, despite a white, white muzzle, carries on, puppy-like, with his younger companion. The audience stomps and sways. Our Whitehall gently rocks in time with the band.

Among the trees in the park, people grill their suppers. Some folks cook aboard boats. All we have to sustain us are bottles of water. When the last song moans to its end I haul our anchor. In 20 minutes the Whitehall is moored; I stow my oars in the truck.

We decide to dine at the Seahorse, beside the marina. The dining room is formal; the barroom, anything but. The noise level here makes the concert seem tame. Two televisions vie for attention with the straining conversations. Our meals are delicious, the waiter and waitress harried. The 50 customers, including those two deep around the small semicircular bar, bulge the room. Clientele clog the doorway, spill onto the porch.

When we return to *MoonWind* in her slip, the quiet overwhelms us. We repose in the cockpit, savoring the last of the lengthy summer evening. Dark envelops the boatyard. The stars gaze mutely down at their reflections.



### Boats and life

This is a beautiful collection of ninety short tales about the boating Matthew Goldman has done in his life—in sailboats, canoes, rowboats, and other floating craft. All these memoirs deal with the water—from the puddle to the sea.

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Upon receipt of a new book, I like to read the back cover. Publishers' promises tend to be extravagant. Many times I've been assured of a life-changing result if I would "just follow a few simple suggestions." You know the drill. The most recent arrival's included the following:

"Build a Wooden Boat that is light, durable, and furniture quality beautiful. Inside *Building Strip-planked Boats*, you will find:

Complete plans for a canoe, a kayak and a dinghy.

Step-by-step instructions for any strip-built boat.

Everything you need to know about materials, tools, and safety.

Tips on how to adapt your favorite boat design to strip construction.

Photos and ideas for decorative treatments to inspire you.

"This book distills Nick Schade's artistry, craftsmanship and decades of experience into the essential bible of strip-planked boat building." (John C. Harris, Chesapeake Light Craft).

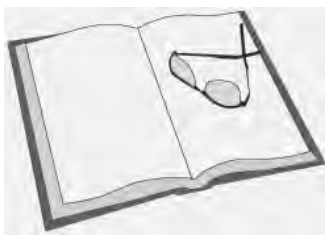
It so happens John is owner of Chesapeake Light Craft, the company which markets all of Nick's kits. One might expect him to be a tad biased and to engage in a bit of hyperbole. Well folks, in my opinion Mr Harris did not overstate himself. The book really is that good!

Before going further, I must confess that, as a stripbuilder, I have been "in rehab" for three decades (that's right, 30 years). The first boat I helped build was a 16' wood-strip canoe. Armed with youth, enthusiasm, and a first edition copy of David Hazen's *The Stripper's Guide to Canoe Building*, my friend Jack and I turned out a fine boat. We were thrilled with the result and thoroughly enjoyed using it. Not surprisingly, we envisioned a fleet of custom beauties stretching towards the horizon.

As work on Hull #2 progressed, however, the sheer tedium of strip-building (as then practiced) began to sap my enthusiasm. Midway I attended the 1979 Small Craft Workshop at Mystic Seaport, coming home with plans for a decked 12' Rob Roy double-paddle canoe. My plan was to coordinate construction of the smaller hull with completion of the larger. I thought this would constitute savings in time, energy, and money and restore my ardor. I used the same strong-back configuration as for the 16-footer and followed the same planking sequence. The process wasn't pleasant and the result wasn't pretty. Hull #2 turned out even better than #1 and went on to a good home. The Rob Roy (and this is putting it charitably) was a "lumpy little clunker" and went onto the scrap heap. At that point, NEVER would be soon enough for another stripper.

The real problem, of course, was not being (at the time) experienced enough to turn out a truly elegant boat. And that's the kind of boat the Rob Roy deserved to be. I wanted to build it to the level promised in John Harris's endorsement, furniture quality beautiful. As it turns out, thanks to *Building Strip-planked Boats* I believe I can now achieve this.

As anyone familiar with Nick's work (designing, building, teaching, writing, and getting out on the water at every possible opportunity) would expect, *Building Strip-planked Boats* is exceptional. I regard Ted Moore's books as benchmarks in the strip-planked canoe and kayak genre and this book puts Nick solidly in that category. No small accomplishment.



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## Book Review

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### *Building Strip-planked Boats*

*With Complete Plans and  
Instructions for a Dinghy,  
A Canoe, and a Kayak  
You Can Build*

By Nick Schade  
International Marine/McGraw Hill  
Camden, ME – Copyright 2009  
280 Pages – Soft Cover  
The Book and Boats That Changed My Mind

Review by Rodger C. Swanson

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As to the author's goals, I'll let him speak for himself:

"The goals of this book are to introduce strip-building to beginners, to provide new ideas to novice builders, and to help experienced builders bring their work to the next level..."

My first focus when reviewing a building manual is: Could one build a boat they're pleased with and proud of solely from the information in this manual? Re: *Building Strip-planked Boats*, absolutely!

My second focus: How clearly and efficiently does the author impart the information necessary to accomplish the above? My "lifetime list" icons in this area are Ted Moores, Walter J. Simmons, Thomas J. Hill, and David Nichols. Simmons and Moores are sparse, no-nonsense writers; Nichols employs some wry humor at key points; and Hills' style is self-effacing but direct. Nick's style is a match for clarity. His text engages the reader so they feel they're both learning something and getting somewhere (even though all they've done so far is read). Nick's forte is the occasional chuckle-inducing curve (as in "Don't even think of using your significant other's measuring cups!"), which I find refreshing.

He devotes the first ten chapters to laying out the tasks and methods entailed in just about any strip-building process you might want to attempt. The last three chapters describe how you can apply these to three (very different) designs. In each case, he includes demonstration of design-specific tasks (installing gunwales, seats, and accomplishing decorative treatments) that provide a full exploration of the building process. In order, Coot, Nymph, and Petrel present the reader with the "beginner-to-novice-to-experienced builder" progression promised in the statement of goals.

In this respect, *Building Strip-planked Boats* is a rarity. Most books of this type, however excellent in other respects, focus on

a specific expertise level. It seems that once most craftsman have gone on to the next level, they can seldom any longer do justice to the prior one. Nick moves from the simple to the intermediate and on to the complex smoothly and seamlessly. Coot gets as much attention as Nymph and Petrel and isn't required to apologize to its more evolved kinfolk. Consequently, a beginner can build the dinghy with the assurance they're producing a craft worthy in its own right. Nymph and Petrel builders can rest with equal comfort on their own laurels.

Many of the best builders are also gifted designers. Their hulls have a distinctive aesthetic signature that sets them apart, you know them when you see them. Pulling this off requires a surety of skill that allows application of a specific construction technique to a given hull form in a fashion resulting not just in structural integrity and excellent performance but also provides visual delight. All the designer/builders mentioned above bring this to their work. Again, Nick shows himself to be in excellent company.

Turning then, to the high-lighted focal points laid out by the good Mr. Harris:

"Complete plans for a canoe, a kayak, and a dinghy;" all the designs are excellent. I learned to sail in an Atkin pram and have retained a liking for the type. Coot's an excellent example, with the lines to be a good performer. While I think it's at its best in the rowing version presented, Nick points out its adaptability to sail. I wouldn't rule this out if one would like a boat that can either sail or row well within its design limitations. My principal reservation about dinghies is their tendency to "ride light." This isn't surprising, given their original purpose was to ferry people and provisions back and forth from dock to larger vessel. Myself, lacking ballast in the form of a passenger, I just toss in a couple of sand bags and proceed happily on my way.

In its original 10' version Nymph was intended as an ultralight craft for the smaller (under 150#) paddler. The more recent 12' incarnation will happily handle a 200-pounder. Nick weighs in at 190 (sorry, fella, but the information is technically pertinent) and finds 10' to be marginal (water getting a bit too close to the gunnels) but 12' "just right."

Visually Nymph is the most out of the ordinary of the three. Her most striking feature is the concave tumble-home sheer-strake, it's gorgeous and just the right touch for setting the hull off as a unique visual feast. But, is it worth all that extra effort? I'd say so. In regard to configuration, the treatment results in a narrowing of the gunnel-to-gunnel width. This makes for greater comfort and efficiency while paddling. Structurally, it provides the hull with extra stiffness. An additional function is to bring the top margin of the sheer-strake more toward the vertical. This allows for easier fitting of the gunnel and greater structural integrity, otherwise, the inner face of the gunnel would require an extreme bevel. There would be extra (and difficult) work in fabricating and the top surface of the outwale would cant at an odd appearing angle.

The Petrel speaks at multiple levels. Its hull form suits the experienced paddler. Its structural elements suit the professional level builder. As the author points out, it can serve as a set piece for going beyond one's previous level. Regarding the internal strongback called for by this design, the preliminary (pp.



67-73) text lays out the how of constructing one, it's in the building chapter that one really begins to capture the why of going to so much effort. Design and fabrication of the deck brings home the visual enhancement achieved through such techniques as book-matching of strips (pp. 6, 63, 106-108, 225 and 240). On this boat, one can pull out all creative stops and go beyond "eye-catching" to "mesmerizing."

"Step-by-step instructions for any strip-built boat;" overall size and intended use are the primary limitations in selecting a design suitable for strip construction. I can't think of any reason why one couldn't use this book to accomplish the task. The only caveat I might state is there would be some instances that would call for choosing a type-specific manual.

For example, if one's desire is a full-size canoe, then Ted Moore's *Canoeecraft* would be the more straightforward route. For a transom-stern outboard skiff, Thomas J. Hills' recent two-part article on building the Jericho Bay Lobster Skiff (*WoodenBoat Magazine*, Issues 210 and 211) would get one on point quickly. For a guideboat, one can't do better than Michael Olivette and John Michne's *Building an Adirondack Guideboat: Wood-strip Reproductions of the Virginia*. All that being said, though, I would still recommend reading *Strip-planked Boats* first and keeping it ready to hand.

"Everything you need to know about materials, tools and safety;" at the simplest level, I can't think of anything he skipped. Regarding the materials section, what's available changes constantly. The occasional builder like myself simply isn't in a position to keep up. Nick's design work (he does a lot of mock-ups and trial runs using materials and techniques) and building efforts are ongoing. He's in an ideal position to experiment, make a truly "informed" choice and go forward with what works best. Books get outdated quickly, though. A good option for keeping up is to check Nick's website ([www.guillemotkayaks.com](http://www.guillemotkayaks.com)) and click on to "Nick's Blog" for ongoing notes, tips, and pointers.

"Tips on how to adapt your favorite boat design to strip construction;" while accurate enough, don't interpret this too broadly. It doesn't mean major modifications such as altering the lines of a hull as drawn by the designer (not something to ever enter into lightly). What it does entail are more on the order of configuration changes. Examples would be cockpit location, size, and shape; larger or smaller deck area; substitution of conventional framing with bulkheads, thwarts, and decking systems; seat/thwart/backrest/footrest style and location; and the like. These aren't inconsequential matters.

Time to invoke my ill-fated Rob Roy effort. The original was built ca 1880. Dimensions: length 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ ', inside beam 27 $\frac{3}{8}$ ', depth at coaming 12". Construction was lapstrake ( $\frac{1}{4}$ " white oak planking over sawn frames, all framing white oak or mahogany); copper fastenings; mahogany fore, aft, and side decks; rectangular cockpit with coaming; mast collar and mast step for a downwind sail; and stern post fitted with gudgeons for a removable rudder. Amidships, the sheer strake carries a moderate tumblehome, tapering to the vertical as it approaches the stems. Altogether, a most handsome little craft.

My basement workshop will accommodate up to a 16' boat. The computer and drafting table are in an adjacent office area. Comes in handy. As said, my original effort resulted

in a "lumpy little clunker." I decided to "take a page" (both literally and figuratively) from Nick's book and do some mocking up to determine how I could improve my approach.

Using the table of offsets, I got out forms from uniform pieces of scrap plywood. While adept enough at lofting, I took the opportunity to check out Nick's lofting suggestions (pp. 47 to 50) and found them clear and helpful. The forms were tacked to an external box beam strongback (pp. 67 to 73) with drywall screws.

The Rob Roy has (proportionally) a short, wide hull. A difficulty encountered in my first attempt was being unable to get the strips to conform smoothly to the curves required of them. Looking at the bottom patterns suggested on page 110, I could immediately see my first error. The stripping sequence was started with fabrication of a "parallel football" bottom and proceeding from there toward the sheerline. While fine for a long, slim hull (15'-16' and up), the parallel football requires subsequent strips to conform to an unmaneuverably sharp arc as the sheer is approached on a shorter, wider hull. It also requires more "twist" toward the stems to get the strip to lay flat. If one compounds these effects with strips that are unnecessarily thick (strips used were  $\frac{1}{4}$ "x $\frac{3}{4}$ " ), they are well along the road to "lumpy clunkiness." The strip rigidity in both dimensions provides the "lump;" the excessive thickness the "clunk."

Having some  $\frac{1}{4}$ "x $\frac{3}{4}$ " strips left over from a repair job, I thickness planed them to  $\frac{3}{16}$ ". Using the thinner strips and starting at the line demarcating the tumblehome sheer margin (i.e., stripping from the sheer upwards), I found I could manage strip distortion well enough to be able to plank fairly close to the bottom. It was apparent a "straight line bottom" could be closed in with reasonable ease.

I'd used 60z cloth originally (inside and out) as that's what was on hand from the larger canoes. Again, this was overkill. As indicated for Nymph, 40z cloth would do just fine. Weight savings: Significant (i.e., vastly reduced "clunk factor").

Turning to the sections on strip fabrication and book matching of strips (pp. 62 to 63, 106, 108), I was able to use woods on hand to make choices that would be both structurally appropriate and visually enhancing.

The other activities aren't pertinent here (they fascinated me, of course, but are likely to merely bore you). Suffice it to say that an hour and a half of re-reading and four to five hours spent in the shop experimenting with mock-ups resulted in a strategy that I'm confident will produce the result I've so long desired.

"Photos and ideas for decorative ideas to inspire you;" there are a lot of them. Read, dream, and enjoy!

Regarding oar and paddle selection for the designs, Nick doesn't state any. I do regard this as an oversight. These are the recommendations he made when I phoned him:


Coot: Good quality 7' lightweight wood oars. (I'd suggest leathered oars with open top oarlocks. Check out Shaw and Tenney's offerings).

Nymph: 239cm double paddle. (The Herreshoff style double paddle offered by Shaw and Tenney would complement Nymph beautifully).

Petrel: 210cm kayak paddle. Nick favors what he calls "conventional" kayak paddle styles. He isn't a great fan of the Greenland style that's recently come into vogue. If you want a paddle that would perform wonder-

fully and would be a perfect visual match for this boat, check out his instructions on making your own in his book, *The Strip-built Sea Kayak* (pp. 160 to 169). If you want ready-made, check Chesapeake Light Craft's online site. They have some good options.

That's about it. Buy the book. Build the boat. See you on the water come Spring!



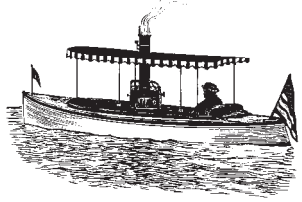
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# You write to us about...

## Adventures & Experiences...

### Golden Days of Long Ago

Her name is Gay, the photo is from 1958, it's a '58 Bug and a 20' Old Town. Gay and her husband still have the boat but not the car.

Bob Bassett, ME



## Information of Interest...

### CRAB Has a Great Year

At the year's end all I can say is "Wow!" All the gloom and doomers and an admittedly low cash flow had me worried. But in reviewing CRAB's numbers at year's end, we had our best year, serving 1,021 sailing sign-ups. I was surprised because the weather forced more cancellations than usual. But a steady stream of small groups kept coming on the word of other programs who found what magic a sail can do for the spirit. Word of mouth still has the power, I find.

As one who's sailed for 63 years, it boggles my mind when I see how a short sail can boost a shut-in's morale. So little can do so much. I am thinking of an 87-year-old who was in tears of pleasure as she thanked me and her skipper after a brief sail. The Central Special School children, and those of Maryland's School for the Blind, are smiling again as they shed their PFDs after their sail. There is just something about being on the water. All this is for me an affirmation of CRAB's mission and, in particular, that we continue to grow when the economy is suffering.

The success of the 2009 season is also a massive affirmation of CRAB's contributors. Some have sent money, local marine businesses have sponsored, and yacht clubs like the Annapolis Yacht Club and the Eastport Yacht Club have shared their facilities to extend CRAB's reach and functions. Our skippers have put in hundreds of patient hours showing the children how "this does this," "this is for that" and letting them "drive" if they are brave enough.

The 2009 US Yacht Shows' Annapolis Sailboat and Powerboat Shows, always an excuse to be around boats and folks who love 'em, found CRAB in their midst. At the Sailboat Show, three of CRAB's fleet were on display: a Freedom 20, *Hermit*; an Aero 20, *Jimmy* (same hull as a Freedom but with an Aero rig); and *Doubler*, CRAB's highly modified adaptive cruiser, formerly a Marshall 22 Catboat.

US Yacht Shows hosted a special party for vendors aboard the *Catherine Louise*, a 95' private charter yacht owned by Watermark Cruises, Annapolis. US Yacht Shows' management dedicated the party's proceeds to CRAB, a sizable chunk of change. Boat

show management also allowed CRAB to sell tickets for our annual raffle. CRAB's close association with US Yacht Shows resulted in CRAB's co-sponsoring Nautical Flea Markets last spring and next spring at the Naval Academy football field. I am delighted to participate in US Yacht Shows' activities, a great group of people and really fun, informative events.

Looking ahead, I see CRAB slowly and carefully refining the current sailing program and adding fishing opportunities to the program. So far we have not found, or been able to fund, an appropriate powerboat that can take wheelchair users aboard in their chairs. Those of you who have been following CRAB know that the envisioned vessel is a 38' to 46' commercial powerboat in the deadrise style of a Chesapeake Bay waterman's workboat. A Markley 46' would do quite nicely and all we have to do is cut out the transom for a tailgate ramp, like a pickup truck or castle moat gate.

This has been a dream for a long time. But we have learned that the dream is often the harbinger of reality. CRAB's Board shares that dream and it is only a matter of time when those rockfish fall victim to the guys and gals in their wheelchairs in the boat the name of which is already chosen, *King*. All our boats are named after crabs!

Reef Early.

Don Backe, CRAB, Chesapeake Region Accessible Boating, PO Box 6564, Annapolis, MD 21401, info@crab-sailing.org, (410) 626-0273.

### The Catboat Race

Thank you for publishing my request for information about *The Catboat Race*. I have received two letters with copies of the article and one phone call. The article is from *The Marlinspike Sailor* by Harvey Garrett Smith. It is well worth reading, even if a person does not intend to build one.

I intend to build a set of the boats for the dock at our Minetto Park here in Oswego, New York, which is on a branch of the New York State Barge Canal.

Carl C. Allen, Oswego, NY

### Happy to Accommodate

I was happy to accommodate subscriber Carl Allen's wish for the source of *The Catboat Race*. This rang a bell in my mind because years ago I was fascinated by this project. It is in Hervey Garrett's *The Marlinspike Sailor*; one of my books. I copied it, now he can build one himself.

Hans Waecker, Georgetown, ME

### About Those Caille Outboards

I enjoyed seeing the old ad for a 1924 Caille Liberty Twin outboard in the November issue. The enclosed photos show my 1924 Caille Liberty Twin pushing me along in my 1949 Feathercraft 12' rowboat and resting on its stand afterwards. These motors were less expensive because of the lack of gears in the lower unit. They also were popular for shallow water operation.

Caille was a slot-machine manufacturing company in Detroit, Michigan. They also made a five-speed model that looks like a tra-

ditional outboard. The tiller handle raised and lowered for reverse, neutral, low, medium, and high which was accomplished by changing the pitch of the propeller. They also marketed a motor with the prop in front of the lower unit. This was called a "tractor" lower unit. I guess being a slot machine company and not a traditional marine company they tried different ideas.

Henry Champagne, Greenback, TN



## Information Wanted...

### Chinese Junk Designs?

Now that I live near the water, I wish to answer a childhood dream and build a Chinese junk type boat. Do you (or any of your readers) have information or leads to the design of the Chinese junk style. Any sense of direction would be appreciated. Thank you.

Lyman Elliott Jr, Sturgeon Bay, WI, (920) 743-7580, pbahlelliott@charter.net

### Best Boat for an Octogenarian?

Is there any kind of small boat that a mid-octogenarian can use with a reasonable degree of safety? My last attempt (a beamy 12' canoe) a few years ago was just a bit too precarious, and an earlier venture with an 8' sailing pram was something less than a howling success.

Or is it time to finally swallow the anchor?  
Joseph Ress, 45 Pontiac Rd, Waban, MA 02468

## Opinions...

### Should Be Enshrined

The "Constant Waterman" wrote a gem for his journal in the December issue. It should be enshrined along with *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack*, *Moby Dick*, and *The Mirror of the Sea*. Thanks for the review of the latter.

Clarence Burley, Paxton, MA

## Projects...

### Just Finished

I just finished my first boat building project, a 7½' Portuguese style dinghy designed by Harry Vartiola and am looking forward to receiving a sample copy of your magazine as you offer on your website.

Chris Flowers, Durham, NC

We had decided that the current configuration of *Solid Waste* was not the best that it could be. Yes, it was a boat and it did float and work well enough but it resembled a shipping container with an attitude more than a boat, so we dragged it to DJ's father's garage for remodeling. The time of year had to be summer because the garage was unheated and we needed the temperature to be suitable for working and the curing of the polyester resin that we needed to coat the fiberglass with. Both of us had day jobs so the work took place in the evenings and on weekends, but mostly evenings.

This meant that the mosquitoes from the adjacent swamp were in full song and the level of discomfort with sweat and bugs would be at its maximum. Each evening's labor started with the discharge of a can of bug spray in the garage. We figured that if we were using foul-smelling resin the added chemicals were of little additional harm and some revenge was felt against our small but numerous tormentors. The discomfort of this was eased by a steady supply of beer, which aided in the decision making process.

After a few evenings of de-construction we found a place to stop. We were in luck as the main hull parts were sound but the cockpit sole was gone along with the well surrounding the motor. A design began to form in the vapor-filled garage, seeming to come in and out of focus as the beer and bugs vied for our attention. The first thing that became obvious was that the price of marine grade screws and boat lumber was out of our reach so much scrounging was begun.

It happened that I had a habit of rowing around in Salem Sound in a peapod for fun and exercise, and during one of my rows I landed on Cat Island just off of Marblehead Harbor. On the beach I discovered the remains of a wrecked powerboat not a lot bigger than *Solid Waste*. It had been built by someone who knew what he was doing for someone who could afford it, it was already picked pretty clean of all usable hardware but the cabin was intact and featured real boat lumber already cut into real boat shapes and as a bonus was fastened together with real boat screws which were salvageable as well. I told DJ about it and we decided to salvage as much of it as we could to re-use in our effort.

The location of it on an island required some ingenuity to retrieve it. I had an acquaintance with a small aluminum skiff equipped with a small outboard motor that we borrowed one Saturday and this, along with my fiberglass peapod, made up our retrieval fleet. We set out to the island on a fine summer day armed with suitable tools of deconstruction. When we arrived at the island we began to carefully unscrew all the fine bronze screws and save each one until we had removed the cabin roof, the cockpit sides, and as much of any usable lumber as we could fit into the skiff and the peapod. When this hard-won hoard arrived at the garage the reconstruction could begin, or so we thought.

The first thing was the frames for the cockpit sole. None of the salvaged parts suited but I had at my disposal some old hard pine shelves salvaged from the wood dump on Stanley St. Not knowing anything about boat lumber, though, I consulted an old boat carpenter and he gave his blessing to hard pine, saying to use it any place we would otherwise use oak. Thus encouraged, we set out fitting and fastening bits of wood into *Solid Waste* in as artful a way as we could.

# Adventures in *Solid Waste*

## Part 2

By Henry Szostek

Salvage is a fine thing but it is not enough in all cases and we had to buy some new plywood for the larger parts. In keeping with the boat's original structure we used exterior grade plywood from the house building lumberyard rather than marine grade from the boat building lumberyard, after all it was going to be covered with fiberglass anyway so who would be able to tell? When the time came to buy fiberglass and resin we searched until we found a man selling cloth and resin out of his garage up behind the airport.

A sign on his uncut and rustic front lawn read "Experimental Weed and Crabgrass Farm, DO NOT DISTURB!" This was a mindset we could understand, his overhead was low and so were his prices, so we were not put off by not having a brand name pedigree on the stuff. It did the job well enough for our purposes. We decided that a cabin would be a nice feature, somewhere where we could get out of the weather and more importantly somewhere DJ's wife could retreat to use the bucket in privacy.

The other thing about a cabin is that it holds all the stuff that would otherwise be underfoot in the cockpit. The best benefit, though, is that with a proper cabin and windshield it looked more like a boat and less like a shipping container. In order to avoid the need for interior lights and wiring we decided that windows would let in enough light to suffice, but marine grade windows were again out of reach so we cut holes in the cabin sides in the shape of windows that looked right and on the inside we fastened pieces of Lexan sheet obtained from an industrial scrap dealer in an old mill complex in Salem; yes, for those of you in the know, Young Engineering again came to the rescue.

The days wore on and the pieces began to fit together in a more or less nautical fashion, or so it seemed to our eyes as best

we could tell by the one bare light bulb in the garage. When the final shape was complete the next step was paint. Now I know that marine paint is expensive so we substituted Rustoleum from the hardware store. It worked fairly well and was a lot cheaper than the stuff from the yacht store. The color scheme was white with buff decks and brown where you would expect bright work.

I challenge anyone to stand back 30' and tell the difference between brown paint and varnished mahogany. If you can tell the difference just stand back a little more. I met a man who had a proper yacht which he kept in Manchester. When he was having it built the designer, Sam Crocker, asked him if he wanted varnished mahogany trim or brown paint.

When he asked, "what's the difference?" the answer was, "If you chose varnish then you can spend your summers touching up the varnish, and if you chose brown paint you can spend the time sailing."

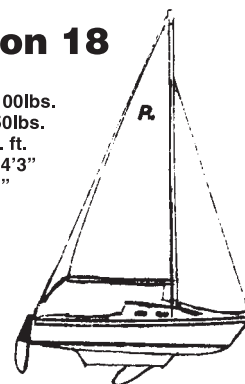
With this professional encouragement and the old boatyard maxim, "A little putty and a little paint makes a boat what she ain't," the final brushstrokes were applied to this folk art masterpiece and the job seemed to be done. We declared it so and the adventures could begin in earnest.

(To Be Continued)

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We could not have asked for a better day in early November, bright sun, temperatures approaching the 60° mark, and calm. Too calm for some but a welcome change for many of those crews who had just the week before competed at the Weir River race with winds gusting into the mid-40mph range, an exciting event where a full two-thirds of the boats entered did not finish.

Nelsons Beach in Plymouth, Massachusetts, was the venue and what a great spot. The entire 3.5-mile race course was viewable from the beach with the start and finish line right there. Hosted by Saquish Rowing of Plymouth and sponsored by Shaw & Tenney of Maine, the theme of the event was definitely that of traditional, mostly fixed seat rowing craft. This was the inaugural race and the only open water event in New England that specifies rowing only, no paddlers.

The array of craft that gathered for this race was made up of some formidable crews from up and down the East Coast. Dorries, Adirondack guideboats, Whitehalls, wherry's, six-oared mighty pilot gigs, Manville gigs, whaleboats, double-enders, and many more including sliding-seat open water craft and racing shells, 46 boats in all, 130 rowers. It was a feast for the eyes just patrolling the beach and viewing these gorgeous boats.

## East Coast Open Water Rowing Championships

By Pete Smith

Photos by Hilary Moll  
[www.hilarymoll.com](http://www.hilarymoll.com)

Shaw & Tenney brought their brand new and beautiful Whitehall to display. Traditional looking but modern lightweight design, she looked fast but they could not be persuaded to race her.

The format for the race had boats all going off together in heats, which made for some great viewing as many of the races came down to the wire, making for some exciting finishes. Mike Jenness of Saquish Rowing, with the help of a public address system, was able to call the racing and did so like it was a horse race. He did a great job announcing the play by play so, unlike most open water venues, the spectators knew what was going on.

The fastest time of the day was posted by Al Flanders of Cape Cod, rowing a sliding seat shell, posting a time of 20:03, with the Cape Cod Rowing high school mixed crew

just a few seconds off at 20:27. Fixed seat racing legends Paul Neil and Jon Aborn won their classes (oar on gunnel and w/outriggers) with times of 27:20 & 28:01. The men's double dory class came down to the wire with Cote and Swift from New Jersey losing by six seconds to reigning world dory champions Tarantino and Jarvis of Gloucester. The pilot gig class was highly competitive as well with local favorites Saquish Rowing edging out the "Come Boating" crew from Belfast, Maine, with times of 26:29 and 27:02. Check out the website for all the results, [www.eastcoastopenwaterrowingchampionship.org](http://www.eastcoastopenwaterrowingchampionship.org).

After the racing was over the crews gathered at the Weathervane Restaurant on the pier for the medals ceremony and party. A lot of medals were given out as well as a dozen or so beautiful handmade presentation plaques and trophies from Shaw & Tenney.

Look for next year to be a slightly different format as Saquish is talking about holding a handicapped sprint race for all the class winners to determine an overall champion after the 3.5 race is over. Also, next year the after race party will likely be held on the beach under a tent where people will be fed and have more opportunity to mingle post race.

All in all a great day and a firm foundation for the future of this Championship event.









Cabin skiff.



Helping hands.



Lineup on the hard.



Plenty of parking room.

Heading out to join the fun afloat.



# Glen-L Gathering of Boat Builders

Once Again a Big Hit!

By Gayle Brantuk

The last weekend in October marked the third year of successful Glen-L Gatherings of Boat Builders at Lake Guntersville, Alabama. I wrote an article last year stating that the event keeps getting better every year, and this year I heard that phrase echoed by many who attended.

Boat builders came from all around the US and Canada with boats in tow, whether completed or in progress. The farthest came all the way from Oregon, towing his Glen-L 15' Ski King ski boat. This year there were about 30 boats and close to 100 people.

Most brought Glen-L boats, but others brought production boats or those of other designers. There were even two hover crafts which were novel additions. Many came for inspiration, ideas, or just to make sure there are actually folks out there building boats. And indeed there are!

As always, this event is totally organized and carried out by the members of the Glen-L Boat Builder Forum. This active community of builders and hope-to-be builders provide and cook all of the food and take care of everything else that is involved with the Gathering. All seemed to agree that this was the best Gathering ever.

The conception for the Gathering started several years ago because many of the Forum members were building Glen-L boats and wanted to get together to see each others' boats, swap ideas, and, of course, try out their creations. Two members, Dave Grason and Bill Edmundson, scouted out areas to hold the event and decided on Lake Gun-

tersville State Park. The State Park has been a beautiful location for the past three years, but because of scheduling issues, next year's event will be held in a different location. The 2010 Gathering will be at Hales Bar Marina and Resort on Nickajack Lake in Tennessee, September 24-26.

The boats this year were spectacular as always. There were several mahogany runabouts; two 10' Squirt runabouts, one converted to jet power; a Hot Rod which definitely lived up to its name; a garvey-style open center console in which the builder had done extensive inlaid woodwork; a three-point hydro; a cabin and console skiff; a cabin cruiser; several sailboats, open fishing boats, more runabouts, rowboats and the hover crafts.

Dave Grason even brought his Zip runabout and somehow talked several into helping him paint it! Now that's one way to get a boat finished, teamwork!

Allyn Perry, retired Glen-L Shop Foreman, also attended the event and was on hand to answer questions. It was rewarding for him to see many boats that were created around frames he built during his over 35 years working at Glen-L.

The highlight of this year's event was Saturday afternoon when about ten of the boats were in the water at the same time, jumping wakes, running in formation, and just having a great time. The awesome feeling that overcame me from seeing all of my father's designs and the wonderful people who built them, was hard to put into words.

My father, Glen L. Witt, founded Glen-L Marine Designs back in 1953. Even though he is getting along in years, he still comes in to work several days a week and writes articles and even recently finished a book and a new design. His love for boats and designing is still strong. He was thrilled to see the video of his boats in action.

The Glen-L Gathering of Boat Builders continues to serve as an avenue for like-minded individuals to gather and share their love of building boats. This has got to be one of the nicest groups of people I've ever met. Each year we meet old friends and start building new ones, boats and boat building is celebrated and life is good. I hope you'll join us next year and become part of this growing community of boat builders. Contact Glen-L for information at [www.Glen-L.com/gathering](http://www.Glen-L.com/gathering) or give us a call at (562)630-6258.

Hydroplane.





More mixing it up on the water.



Hot Rod.

Monaco.



I did something rather selfish today. It was most likely wasteful, profligate, and environmentally insensitive. At least, I hope I did. I won't actually know until tomorrow. But I hope so. I made an offer on an old runabout I had been sort of tracking on craigslist. Hey, I admit to doing what Kate tartly refers to as "Boat Porn" on a more or less continuous basis. But you see, I really don't have a problem and I can quit any time I want.

Anyhow, I've been looking for "just the right boat" to play out a bit of fantasy. It really makes no sense at all, at least to most people. But see what you think.

Lately there have been a number of retrospectives published that attempt to explain "how we got into this mess." You know, the economy, and world affairs, and our reputed national sense of dissatisfaction, and all that societal malaise stuff. Most of the books of this recent genre seem to look for a sort of starting point. And that makes perfect sense. After all, if you don't know how something started out, it's pretty hard to guess how it might end up. Right?

Much of this learned discourse points to 1963 as "The End of Innocence" for the US. That was just before the Kennedy brothers, MLK, and others were gunned down at the height of social prominence. "Watts" was just another poor neighborhood in LA. Vietnam was still a place nobody ever heard of. And so forth. Many economists and other media pundits point to the summer of 1963 as a moment of serenity before everything started spewing out of the proverbial fan. I think it's true.

That was the summer I met my first Glasspar Avalon runabout. She was new and totally "factory stock." Everything worked. The brand spanking new Johnson 40 fired up without hesitation and broke into the most lovely purring sound at idle. I'm pretty sure the boat never sported a name on her hind quarters, which seems odd now. And I was only sort of an acquaintance of a friend of a

## A Sense of Symmetry

By Dan Rogers



"The new girl moves in for the winter, hopefully to re-emerge a beautiful princess, once again, in the spring."

guest. But, somehow, I managed to become the helmsman, then the skipper, in short order. It was love at first sight. Forty-six years later that particular craft still commands a place of prominence in my dimming cerebral cortex.

The Avalon seemed to accommodate a crowd of folks IN the boat, while one or two more followed behind on skis. Plenty of power to get one up out of the hole. Most 16-footers only had 35-40 horses doing the flutter kick in those days. We thought we were going fast. Now we see small rowboats with more engine. But back in the summer of '63 a new 16' Glasspar, a majestic Johnson Seahorse 40, and a couple of water skis were the grist of adventure. Romance, actually.

We have recently moved from the palm-fringed waters of San Diego Bay to the now-quite-frozen-over shores of Diamond Lake,

Washington. It's been quite a transition, culture shock, actually. But sort of a homecoming as well. You see, Diamond Lake is where the Glasspar Avalon of myth and memory once roared, er, purred, her way across the water. Yep, just across the lake from us, down by the Scout Camp.

So, what's all this about making an offer on a boat? And what's it got to do with anything profligate? Well, this isn't just ANY boat. This is a 16' Glasspar Avalon. Except this particular one has a hundred horse mill hanging on the rear end. That's a ten with another zero after it! That's a moon rocket! That's a...

OK, by contemporary standards this new boat is neither big, fast, nor fancy. But as long as I've had a name in mind for a boat that there is no earthly REASON to be looking for, for about ten years now, it seems like a worthy project. Yeah, I know, I'm the guy who does all that ranting and raving about stinkpotters who roar by us proper seamen, proper seamen, sailing proper vessels, with their wakes and noise and chaos. Yep. I can hardly wait for the ice to melt! I can already feel that little spit kit flying out of the hole and prop-walking across the lake! It's gonna be awesome.

The name? Why, *Summer of '63*, of course. Now, if I just looked like I did back then on water skis.

I drove down to Spokane and bought this little spit kit from a guy who needed the money more than the boat. Turns out the "Avalon" is a "Citation." Same hull, but the interior is put together better. Just about all the parts are there, even the original seats. They'll turn to dust if I sit on 'em, but hey, most anything made out of almost-50-year-old vinyl will be a bit crotchety. And yes, that windshield will be on the shop floor almost immediately. I'm certain the old girl is embarrassed to be seen in public wearing such a thing.

*Messing About in Boats*, February 2010 – 11



Cape Bauld on Quirpon Island in the distance (at 51°40').

I am well aware that John Cabot's first landing in the New World happened over 500 years ago, on the morning of June 24, 1497, to be exact, and lots has been written about this historic event. So why add yet another personal opinion? After all, there still is no document saying exactly where he landed. All we know is that Cabot could have stepped ashore between Cape Bauld at the northern tip of Newfoundland and anywhere along the coast of Nova Scotia, Maine, or even Massachusetts, depending on which historic school you follow. Most historians, though, limit their educated guesses to two places in Canada: Cape Bauld on Quirpon Island, Newfoundland (pronounced "carpoon" as in "harpoon," which is also its meaning), and Cape North on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia.

I feel, though, that a lot more can be said about the facts surrounding the actual landing spot. Why, for instance, do we not have a trip log or account of the voyage? Why did Cabot decide to head across the Atlantic in the direction of Cape Bauld? These are just two of my many questions.

Since I am a practical person and an ocean sailor and paddler to boot, I felt I had to check out both these places in order to see which could be the most likely place for a first landing and which would fit the sparse information we have on this "prima terra vista." Cabot can't have made a "first landing" in two places.

But most importantly, these questing trips would give me a great excuse for two wonderful solo ocean canoe trips in my trusty 17'2" Kruger sea canoe and supply the motivation to carry on when the going got rough. Because my plan was to circumnavigate Cape Breton Island in 2007 as well as paddle up the entire western shore of Newfoundland to its tip at Cape Bauld/L'Anse aux Meadows in 2008, two ten-day, 340-mile trips. (See

Questing for John Cabot's "Prima Terra Vista."



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## John Cabot's "Prima Terra Vista" Columbus, Cabot, Cartier and Champlain:

By Reinhard Zollitsch

*MAIB*, January and November 2008 for my reports on these trips, or my website.) Merely driving up to check out the actual landing sites did not even occur to me. But first, back to the history books.

### Latitude Sailing

Two historic events preceded Cabot's 1497 trip. First, we all know that "in fourteen hundred ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue." Interesting for me, being fascinated by early navigation, was that Columbus dropped down to the Canary Islands off Africa first before heading straight west across the open ocean. No, he was not trying to catch the trade winds. Nobody had sailed there before him so the trades across the "Western Ocean," the Atlantic, were not known yet. He dropped down to the Canaries at 28° north because he wanted to reach the latitude of Marco Polo's "Cipango and Cathay," Japan and the Orient. (This course was a good one and would have taken him just south of Japan and south of the mouth of the mighty Yangtze River at today's city of Shanghai, China, if only the American continent weren't in the way.) You see, he wanted to reach the Orient in the east by going west around the world. This was a completely new concept and should work, if Ptolemy's concept of a round world held true.

And Columbus did what every good navigator of his days would do: sail latitude. They would sail up or down a known coast to a jump-off point and then sail straight east-west, leaving the North Star, the guide star, at a specific angle to the horizon. In northern latitudes, say in Norway, this angle would be steeper than sailing in more southern latitudes, like Gibraltar and the Mediterranean Sea. A latitude was like a rubber band guaranteeing a safe return on the same angle to the North Star and a reverse compass course.

Since chronometers were not invented until the 18th century, longitudes could not be accurately determined since they are time related; i.e., they are based on the course of the sun around the world in 24 hours, or 15 degrees of longitude per hour. So distances

were carefully measured with a ship's log and, yes, according to the authority on geography, Ptolemy, Columbus had sailed the "proper" distance on the "right" course to the Orient. Unfortunately Ptolemy had pictured a much smaller world without the American continent. The Pacific Ocean, as Magellan was to find out in 1519-1522, was also wider than a few days' sail from the strait he found at the tip of the South American continent (now named after him). Until his death, Columbus thus believed in Ptolemy's figures and stubbornly maintained that he had reached the Orient. This does not speak too well for being flexible and open-minded, in my book. Columbus was also much too proud to admit he had made a mistake and eventually he paid for his pride.

John Cabot navigated basically the same way. He, however, was not headed from Bristol, England, to the northern tip of Newfoundland because he had no idea what "new land" he would find on the other side of the "Western Ocean," the Atlantic. He simply departed from a known point in his neck of the woods, the southwest corner of Ireland, from the last cape there, Dursey Head, at 51°40' north, and for almost 35 days sailed more or less on that latitude.

It just so happens that this latitude is also the latitude of Cape Bauld on Quirpon Island, Newfoundland. And that is the only reason John Cabot, Jacques Cartier (in 1534), and so many other early sailors and fishermen headed for this place. It must have been a very disappointing landfall, though, since the northern tip of Newfoundland is flat as a pancake for almost 60 miles and therefore hard to see from sea, especially in the ubiquitous fog, haze, and rain up there. The steep Labrador coast across the ten-mile wide Strait of Belle Isle would have been a much better target.

But wait a minute: Like Columbus, Cabot was also aiming for the Orient, "Cipango and Cathay." But unlike Columbus, he would have missed his target by a long shot. Following latitude 51°40' north to the west would have taken Cabot to the southern tip of the now-Russian peninsula of Kamchatka, a Siberialike icebox of a place only appreciated by salmon and bear. Fortunately for Cabot and the 20 sailors on the *Matthew*, they were stopped by the North American continent.

### The Treaty of Tordesillas

The second historic event, as I see it, explains why we do not have a trip log or any other official report about John Cabot's first





Flat, treeless tundra at northern tip of Newfoundland.



Cabot Trail

landing in the New World, like those from Jacques Cartier (1534) or Samuel de Champlain (1603). After Columbus's first sail across the Atlantic in hopes of reaching the Far East, a mad rush of Spanish/Portuguese land grabbing took place. These two most powerful seagoing nations at that time even threatened each other with war. So Pope Alexander VI decided to step in and ameliorate/settle the strife. In 1493/94 he summoned representatives of these two Catholic countries to Tordesillas, Spain, and made peace; that is, he drew a line through the middle of the North Atlantic "370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands" off Africa (at approximately 46°30' west on today's maps; or picture the southern tip of Greenland and go from there on a meridian straight to the South Pole and up the other side).

Here was the deal: Spain was given the western half of the globe for exploration, acquisition, and hopefully also converting the "native heathens" to Christianity. Portugal was given the eastern half. If you follow that line you will notice that the eastern part of Brazil, all the important harbors, that is, are east of that line; i.e., became Portuguese, which explains why Brazilians speak Portuguese to this day and not Spanish, as all other Latin American countries do. The contested "spice islands" near the Philippines were right on the line and remained a bone of contention since east/west distances could not be measured accurately without a chronometer (see explanation above).

Spain and Portugal accepted the Pope's ruling while England and France were understandably miffed, being totally left out of this major geographic deal. So in order not to provoke these two nations as well as the Pope, England sent John Cabot (born Giovanni Caboto in his native town of Genoa, Italy) on a "secret mission" to see what he could find on a more northerly heading, away from the preferred southern Spanish/Portuguese routes. This was only three years after the Treaty of Tordesillas.

How about going straight west off SW Ireland, the most western corner of Europe, at about 50 degrees north? No big send-off, no fanfare, no written reports, mum was the word.

And Cabot did as he was told. He sailed his boat, the *Matthew*, past Dursey Head at about 51°40' north and used it as his jump-off point, keeping more or less the same course all the way across the Atlantic and, yes, that would have taken him right to Cape Bauld on Newfoundland. It would have, but he did not land there. (Suspense!)

After Cabot returned, he immediately reported to King Henry VII in London but no official report was filed and no official ship's log was ever found. The news, however, got out fast and traveled to Spain via a "spy-report," a letter by John Day directly to the "Lord Grand Admiral," Columbus himself. (This letter, by the way, was not found until 1955 in the Spanish National Archives. See copy of this letter in Peter Firstbrook's book, pp. 172-173.)

And what were the sparse facts in this report? We hear that it took Cabot 35 days to cross the Atlantic, and when he was about to make a landfall, he was hit by yet another storm, a nor'easter, which blew his boat off course to the south across the fishing banks, almost to the latitude of Bordeaux at 45° north, which is clearly south of Newfoundland. Running before the storm and being driven by the south-setting Labrador current to boot, maybe with just a small storm jib set, he thus missed the island of Newfoundland completely. At that point, I figure, he must have been desperate to reach land, any land, since his distance was run. And then, there it was on the western horizon, a 30-mile long mountain range with a height of about 1,500', looking like the tip of a continent, Cape North on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia.

The report then goes that they went ashore, only once and very briefly, to raise "the banners ...of the Holy Father and the King of England," thus claiming this "new-found land" for the British crown. They looked around and found "tall trees of the kind masts are made from" and then shoved off again, always vigilant of being attacked by the native Beothuk people (pronounced "Beothic") who had fended off the Vikings in the year 1,000 at St Paul's Inlet along the western shore of Newfoundland. On their return trip they then saw, we hear, more land, for about one month, before they started their eventual Atlantic crossing.

### Analysis

So how does this all play out? If they had landed on Cape Bauld the whole thing would not make any sense whatsoever. The top 60 miles of Newfoundland are practically treeless, boggy tundra, thus there are no mast timbers for sure. Cape Bauld also sits on a tiny island and has only two small landing possibilities on the eastern, the Atlantic, shore. This place is definitely not fit for a claim of an entire continent. And leaving Newfoundland, one would be out on the open ocean immediately, and not see any more land, as they did for about an entire month.

If John Cabot, however, had landed on Cape Breton Island, he would then have to sail back up to latitude, to 51°40' north, namely back up to Cape Bauld. The *Matthew* would have crossed the Cabot Strait in a northeasterly direction and hit the south shore of Newfoundland, possibly noticing the two islands mentioned in the report, St Pierre and Miquelon. Cabot would then leave shore to port all the way around the island of Newfoundland till he reached his jump-off point at the Dursey Head latitude of about 51°40' north. This could have taken a leisurely month, as mentioned. He definitely would not have sailed up the western shore of Newfoundland and out the Strait of Belle Isle, because this strait was not known then and he needed to reach the open Atlantic and not get stuck in a big bay; i.e., he would have to keep all shore to port, his left.

### Summary

Cape Bauld, as I see it, was definitely on the latitude Cabot was headed for across the Atlantic, since it was on the same latitude as his point of departure. But, as we hear, he was blown by there in a storm and thus missed landing there. From a sailor's point of view, a landing near Cape North on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, makes a lot more sense and agrees with all the sparse information we have about John Cabot's first landing in the New World. However, no matter where he actually landed, he then had to sail back up to latitude. Thus, in my estimation Cape Bauld is NOT the actual point of arrival, NOT the "prima terra vista," but the point of departure. Cape North on Cape Breton Island makes a lot more sense as a first landing spot, but we will never know for sure.

### My Personal Questing

Having paddled my 17'2" covered sea canoe solo around Cape Breton Island in 2007 and up the western shore of Newfoundland from Port au Port to Cape Bauld/L'Anse aux Meadows in 2008, I gained a lot of respect for those brave sailors and now have a much better understanding of what could have happened in 1497. Having sailed a two-masted schooner across the Atlantic from Maine to Cartier's home port of St Malo, France, and having worked on freighters on the Baltic and North Seas as well as the Atlantic in my student days, I also gained some larger perspective of sea voyaging and navigation, but especially the importance of a safe landfall. And the reason for the fact that we do not have a trip



Cabot Strait.



Cape North Light (near landing spot).

log from Cabot himself or any official acknowledgment of his 1497 trip is very simple, Cabot and England were not allowed to talk about this trip following the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas. England and France were simply not allowed to claim any land. It had all been given away by the Pope.

Unfortunately Cabot's next expedition with five boats the following year ended in disaster; four boats were lost with all men aboard, only one boat was forced to return to home port after a few days out with gear problems. It is possible the four boats were wiped out along America's shores by a hurricane or by their rivals, the Spaniards or Portuguese, who felt totally "legal" in thwarting foreign trespassers' attempts to claim new land on their "god given"

turf; i.e., area given to them by the Pope himself at the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494.

We will never know exactly what happened to those brave sailors, but a few old Spanish maps (especially Juan de la Cosa's map of 1500) show names like "Cape of England" and "Sea discovered by the English" etc, almost all the way down to Florida, and the only Englishman ever to sail across the Atlantic in those days was John Cabot. That makes you think, doesn't it?

#### What Next?

But life moves on pointing us in ever new directions. You *MAIB* readers must know where I did my boating the last 15 years in my little 17' sea canoe (if not, check out my website listed be-

low). I can only tell you it was just as exciting as all off my earlier adventures and I am eager to see what the future has in store for me.

Greetings from a waterman, Reinhard.

#### Selective Reading

Brian Cuthbertson: *John Cabot & the Voyage of the Matthew*. Formac Publishing Company Ltd, Halifax, 1997

Peter Firstbrook: *The Voyage of the Matthew*. BBC Books, Ltd, London, 1997 (See complete John Day letter on pp. 172-173.)

Lawrence Bergreen: *Over the Edge of the World*. Harper Collins Publishing, New York, 2003 (on Magellan)

Reinhard Zollitsch, reinhardgmaine.edu  
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After the quarter-mile portage around the falls.

"The Allagash." Say those two words and anyone, including myself, who has heard of the northern Maine River will most certainly conjure up wild images of rushing rapids, miles and miles of northern back woods, black bear, and moose. I have had the romantic notion of paddling down that river; camping alongside the flowing eddies and crashing rapids, starting a campfire, roasting a steak with potatoes, and then, after filling my stomach and sipping on a glass of wine, watching the sun set in the west and the constellations gradually appear one by one in the darkest, inkiest, most profound sky ever. This is what I imagined paddling on the Allagash would be like.

Our adventure actually began on a small island off the west coast of Florida at a potluck supper. As potluck suppers go, this one was OK, fried chicken, potato salad, cole slaw. It's just, I think the potluck supper was created to introduce people to people. We tend to like to find our own people. So generally we are reluctant to attend these functions. However, the tables and chairs were being set up right outside our room, so it was a little difficult to sneak away. So we went; ate the chicken, potato salad, and cole slaw. Then, along with everyone else, we introduced ourselves and the states we were from. People hailed from Illinois, Ohio, Kansas, New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts (that would be us), and Maine. Our antenna went up; Maine, water, boats, lobster, we might have something in common with these people.

As it turned out we had a lot in common with them. They were boaters, we were boaters. They also had kayaks, we had kayaks; they had singles, we had a Clorox bottle double and another Ed had just completed building, an 18' wooden double. Because I am a curious type and wanted to gather some information, I asked if they had ever "done the Allagash." They, in fact, had, three times. As we listened to their adventures the idea of ever "doing the Allagash" became more and more of a pipe dream, something I probably would not like to DO. I guess the constellations would just have to wait.

A year went by and we couples, that would be Louie and Penny and Ed and me, stayed in touch via email and met up again in

## A Maine Yell on the Allagash

By Sue Hammer

Florida on the little island on the west coast, but instead of the potluck we decided to go out for ribs. We talked and talked and the subject of the Allagash came up once again. I shared my hesitation with them, Ed, by the way, was all for doing it.

I have camped many, many times in my life and truly embrace all the outdoors has to offer. I love being self-sufficient, breathing the air filled with the scent of pine. I love sleeping under the stars, the campfire, the abundance of wildlife, and the thought of actually "DOING" the Allagash was truly thrilling to me, the only real reservation I had was the bathroom facilities, there were none.

Well, needless to say, I was talked into the real possibility of paddling the Allagash. I talked at great length to Ed about how we really didn't KNOW these people that well and did he think it was a good idea to entrust our lives to almost perfect strangers? After all, we would be hundreds of miles away deep in the north woods of Maine on a notoriously treacherous river in a Clorox bottle for two, paddling for dear life, having to portage several times and one for a quarter-mile, there were dangerous waterfalls, what about carrying all that food in our boats, what about the bears, what about the no bathroom?

Penny and Louie were heading south on a trip in the spring and asked to stop by for a visit. They did come for a visit and we did solidify our plans for a fall trip, since the river runs south to north it would be up the Allagash. Louie had been the guide on all the other trips so we just let him plan the trip. Louie grew up in northern Maine. There is still a lot we do not know about Louie, he likes it that way, but he certainly seems to know his stuff when it comes to the woods of Maine and, we were to soon discover, also about a lot of other stuff.

The trip was planned for mid-September. Louie said the river water would be warmer and more shallow due to the summer

drought, better, he said, for beginners. Why I asked myself, would we have to be concerned about water temperature and depth, we were going to be IN the kayaks?

The summer came and went and we were getting more frequent emails from Louie regarding the gear and supplies we needed to bring. He would take care of the food and drink. That would include wine (I hoped). We would split the costs. We would each be responsible for carrying supplies. Since we would be paddling a double we would be carrying double the supplies. That made sense. We had been kayaking for many, many years, salt water mostly, but some fresh. We had done the Deerfield River in western Massachusetts several times which, I guess, gave us bragging rights to say we had done some whitewater. We had done some ocean kayaking, both in Maine and in Florida, which I guess would qualify us to include breaking wave action on our watery resume.

We had warm long underwear, we bought some really good sleeping bags which had wicking abilities (in the event they got wet), we had zip-off pants, polar fleece, rain gear, albeit the cheap type, and we had of course TEVAS, most important, we thought, in case we had to pull our kayak over some obstacle or two. We had a small pup tent that was about ten years old but we really liked it and it was easy to put up.

I had started to obsess about bears. I started doing a lot of reading about bears, particularly in Maine. Black bears seemed to be the most prevalent. They also, as long as you didn't surprise them, or aggravate them, or try and steal their babies, were the least aggressive. Just the same I wanted to be prepared (in some way) to protect myself. We went to a famous outdoor supply store which, fortunately, is very near us. I brought with me a 14" bowie knife which had been Ed's grandfather's. I was hoping to buy a sheath for it and then I could strap it to my leg. I explained this all to the salesperson. The salesperson just looked at me, then looked at Ed. Ed just shrugged his shoulders. There were no sheaths that fit this monstrosity. I did a little more reading and found out an air horn would be much more effective and a little less dangerous than hand-to-paw combat with a bear.

Then the date was upon us. We were to drive to Penny and Louie's house which is located on the coast of Maine very near Bar Harbor. It was a six-hour drive for us so we went the night before so to get an early start the next day. It would be a couple hundred miles from their house to a dirt logging road, then another 50 miles on that road to the first night of camping. I had packed a case of bottled water which I had planned to scatter in the bilge of the kayak and also some honey bell oranges to share. The rest would be up to Louie. We would be six nights camping, five days paddling on the river.

Louie does a little lobstering on the side, among other things. He is an electrician for the paper mills in northern Maine. Anyone who knows an electrician knows that they are pretty precise. Ed's father was a master electrician and I can honestly say I really didn't know anyone who was quite as precise as he was, until I met Louie. The night before we left for the Allagash he served us lobster, telling us to enjoy our last supper. Things were starting to sound a little biblical to me.

We left at the crack of dawn. We had piled the kayaks, dry bags with clothes and sleeping bags, food, and wine (yes!) into the bed of the double cab truck and we were off. It took about four hours to drive to the dirt logging road, which would be another 50 miles to Churchill Dam, where we would be camping that first night. We did, in fact, have steaks and potatoes and wine under the constellations. My imagination had paid off, it was the darkest, inkiest, most profound night sky I had ever seen.

We awoke early and drove to launch at Bissonnette. Louie had made arrangements with a guide to pick up his truck and drive it to Allagash Village, where we eventually hoped to end the trip and take out.



Stuffing and packing.

We packed and stuffed and stuffed and packed the kayaks. We had little foot room and soon to find out very little freeboard. We climbed into the kayak to test the maneuverability do to the heavy load, paddled around a little, and decided we were okay. We were off. As we were paddling our feet started getting wet. It seemed we were taking on water. Ed started bailing and I paddled until we could pull out. We realized that due to the heavy load water was leaking into the kayak through the holes where the carrying grips went through the hull. Thank goodness I brought duct tape in case we had an injury and needed a tourniquet or bandage (my nursing background). We taped up the holes, bailed out the kayak, and got underway again.

I cannot even describe the absolute exquisite feral beauty of the northern woods. Not a sound other than the water we paddled through. The wind rustling the trees, an occasional hawk in flight, stunning. We paddled into Long Lake. We hugged the shore due to



Not much freeboard.

the winds and found a place to have lunch. Lunch usually consisted of snack foods, nuts, water, raisins, and Louie's smoked beef jerky (excellent). The day was great, the leaking had slowed down. We did about six hours of paddling before we got to our first campsite on the river, Jalbert.

All the campsites that we used were elevated above the river by about 50'. It was wonderful for viewing but strenuous unpacking all the gear and hauling it up to the site. This, too, just became part of the experience. We set up camp, pitched the tents, and Louie started the fire. Once organized, we walked around the site, checked out the pit toilet, ugh! Then Penny, of course, had to tell me a story about one time when they did the trip with her brother and he mentioned that there were outhouse monsters that lived under the outhouse. THAT was it. I was so glad I brought a bucket with me, it was meant for bailing, but guess what! We had boneless turkey breast that night with veggies and potatoes and cranberry sauce, delicious! We sat around the fire talked and I mentioned to Louie and Penny about my concern about the bears and about my bringing the air horn, thinking they would very proud of my resourcefulness. Louie said, "I brought my 38." Sleep came very quickly that night.

Louie was up every morning at 6:30 on the dot. He had the fire going and coffee brewing by the time we crawled out of our tent. Penny played reveille every morning on her harmonica, lovely!! We ate a pound of bacon every morning, Louie said we needed the protein for the workout every day. Lucky for us no one was a vegetarian. We sometimes had English muffins, pancakes, instant oatmeal, canned fruit. Louie did an incredible job of organizing the food. He knew exactly how much to bring and it was really good. In retrospect, we probably could have eaten wood after six hours of paddling.

We were on the river by 8:30am and paddled until we had to portage at Long Lake Dam. Portaging isn't easy under any circumstances, but with a fully stocked kayak one has to unload all the supplies and carry them to the other entry point and then go back and portage the boats. Several trips easily. We hadn't run into many people so far on this trip. We had seen other campers along the way, however, the campsites are fairly small, so the one time we ran into another group we paddled to the next campsite.

The campsite conditions were as if no one had ever been there, extremely clean with no debris at all. We burned every bit of waste we had. Even the cans Louie would burn and then pound them flat with his hatchet, burn them and then pound them again until there

was nothing left. There was a large picnic table at each site with a ridge pole over it. We would suspend the food bag on the pole to protect it from the animals and also in case of rain one could place a tarp over the table. The fire pit was large and there always was wood to burn. There are rangers who maintained the sites, although we only saw one poling his canoe on the river.



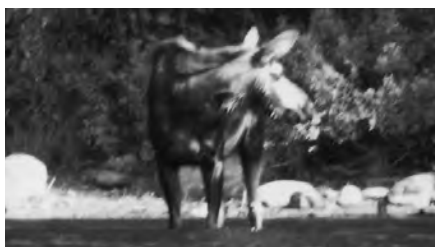
Hanging the food.

The river has rapids along the route, some more vigorous than others. Paddling a double is an interesting feat with rapids, as the sternman must steer and paddle as well. That would be Ed. I would holler direction such as to the left or to the right depending on the obstacle ahead, meaning boulder. Depending on how quickly we would be coming up on it, it might be right, right, RIGHT! Then, of course, he is moving his paddle from side to side quickly, hence comes the bonk on the head from behind!!! Not a nice way to treat your partner. It was a good thing that we had a lot of ballast, it held the boat firmly in the water. Sometimes we would have to get out of the kayak to pull it along due to the skinny water. Slipping and sliding along the slippery river rocks and getting wet was an everyday occurrence. Our seats in the boat became filled with water and remained that way the whole day. Good thing it was a warm September.

The outlet on Round Pond was the third overnight. We had ziti and sauce, brown bread, canned fruit, it was Ed's and my turn to cook. Anything tastes wonderful outdoors over an open fire. As the evening progressed the wine was poured and stories, like the stars, started coming out. Penny asked if we knew what a Maine yell was. Nope, never heard of it. Well, we got lessons that night. You basically fill your lungs to capacity and yell the loudest yell you can. It echoed for miles and no one was around to hear it but us. It was cathartic. Good night's sleep again. Up 6:30am. Ed cooks breakfast. Break down camp, off again.

We paddled from 8:30am to 4-4:30pm every day. Each day seemed better than the one before. We came upon a cow moose foraging in the river. We actually paddled within 15' of her. She kept looking over her shoulder, we figured she had a calf hidden in the woods behind her so we left her to her munching.





Cow moose checking her baby.

As we paddled, the water got skinnier and skinnier, we had to get out and drag the kayak across the bottom. Louie was in front and for some reason it seemed he never had to get out of his kayak. He had proven he could do a lot of things better. Penny was behind us pulling her kayak, and we didn't realize it but she ended up face down in the river. She recovered very quickly and said, "Hey nobody noticed, I was drowning."

What Ed and I discovered very quickly was we were ill-equipped regarding clothing. Both Penny and Louie had the proper boots, pants, and jackets. Meaning even with a dump in the river, Penny was still dry. Ed and I, however, had wet bottoms the whole trip and cold, wet feet. Of course, it helps that Penny works for L.L.Bean.

Cunliff Depot was the fourth night of camping. We arrived and scoped out the site. Ed and I went to the left, Louie went to the right on a little rise, that should have been indication enough. We set up our tents, the fire got started, and it was Penny's turn to cook, or be "Martha Stewart," as she put it. Rice with canned chicken, veggies, and fruit. It started to rain, a gentle mist at first. We put the tarp up and sat and ate our "Martha Stewart" dinner, shared more stories, and went to bed. The wind picked up a little, the rain became more intense, I then realized why Louie had picked the rise. We were floating on our sleeping pads.

Not much we could do, we avoided the middle of the pads where the water was seeping up. I had to get up in the middle of the night to visit the outside and, as I was busy, I glanced into the bushes and noticed two beady eyes looking at me. I doubt I ever finished doing what I was doing more quickly than that night. I jumped back into the tent,



airborne, zipped the zipper, and waited. Ed said, "what is that scratching on the tent?" I said, "It's just a tree branch, go back to sleep." Never heard another scratch, maybe a little furry bunny was hoping to get in from the rain.

The next day was a big one, the dreaded Allagash Falls was coming up. We had to pack up our wet sleeping bags and any other wet gear we had and get underway. We had some paddling to do before we got there. We came upon a beaver dam which we had to paddle

over and around, that was a little tricky and slowed us down a bit. It was very important to paddle according to schedule, otherwise we wouldn't make the miles we needed to in order to complete the trip when planned.

We arrived at Allagash Falls around noon. The chart read "DANGER, 40' falls, use portage to the right." It was decided we would do the portage before lunch. The portage was, to say at the very least, arduous. Up a steep embankment and then through the woods for a quarter-mile. We unpacked the kayaks and walked the gear to the put-in point on the other side of the falls. That took a couple of trips, then we carried the kayaks one by one the same route, that took three more times back and forth. Then we sat by the falls to eat our nuts and raisins.

We put in on the north side of the falls and took a look back at the falls with its rushing waters and huge boulders. Stunning to look at, very grateful we had a way to get around it. We found out later from a ranger that the winter before some snowmobiler actually tried to get UP the falls in his snowmobile (a little too much hooch I would say). The snowmobile stayed there until the next spring, I don't know what happened to the driver.

That brought up another question, what happens to people who suffer injury or worse on the river? There is no way out. Louie told us of a group they went with some years previous. Louie was led to believe they had some experience. Turns out they didn't. Louie found this out after the fact. They capsized their canoe with all the supplies, then decided they didn't want to continue, Louie said you have no choice. Just by chance they happened onto some fly fishermen and those people paid them an exorbitant amount of money to drive them out. Other stories have people who have suffered injuries and heart attacks and died and were strapped into their boats until Michaud Farm which is one of two ranger stations on the river. Nice thought.

We left the falls and had a really nice paddle up the river to Big Brook South. We got there in enough time to start a fire and hang our sleeping bags over the ridge pole. The sleeping bags paid for themselves that night as they were dry by the time we went to sleep. This would be our last night on the river and the next day we would have a pretty long paddle to Allagash Village, the take-out point. We ate baked beans, brown bread, canned fruit. We finished the last of the wine and, leave it to Louie, he had a flask of scotch that we all shared on our final night on the Allagash.

We reminisced about our experiences, at one point during the trip Ed, after many hours of paddling around rocks and boulders, shoulders aching, tired from portaging, and days of a wet butt said to me, "I would pay a helicopter to take me out of here right now." Here we were this last night and we all talked about the challenges of the trip, of all the good company, food, and stories, of the magnificent beauty and ruggedness of the country, the hard work and the laughs, and Ed, recanted and said he was glad there was no helicopter that day. By no means was this an easy trip and we still had one full day of paddling ahead of us, but I felt satisfied and fulfilled. I felt I had had the opportunity to do something wild and wonderful and had learned more about myself and what I could accomplish.

We awoke the next morning and a final day of paddling in a cold rain. We pulled out our raingear. I donned my yellow pants and jacket, Ed opted to wear his jacket only,

he said, "My butt's gonna get wet anyway, why bother?" Off we went. Our yellow Clorox bottle for two had fared well, considering. It now was sitting quite high in the water due to the depletion of all the stores and was more tippy. We started paddling and realized we were heading into more rapids than we had previously. It was difficult maneuvering around and through the rocks.

Suddenly we were coming up on a looming boulder directly in front of us. We paddled for all we were worth, CRASH! Broadside, the kayak hit the boulder, tipped over, throwing both of us out of the boat. Cold water slapped us in the face. Ed held on to me and the kayak, we were able to gather our wits and push the kayak to the shallows. We assessed the situation and realized everything was still in the kayak and pretty much protected due to the dry bags. I stood up in the shallows, Louie and Penny paddled over and I just started laughing. I looked at myself and realized my yellow rain suit was blown up with water and I looked like a yellow "Michelin Man." I was, however, getting cold and there was no way to change my clothes as we could not get out of the water. Louie had an extra waterproof jacket which he gave to me. I kept on the rain pants as I thought they would keep me warmer than not having anything at all. Ed said he was fine and we should just keep moving, so we did.

We paddled off and fortunately the rain kept at a minimum and we just kept on paddling. Louie said, "Not too much longer, just around a few more bends." When we got to a bridge, that would indicate we had arrived at Allagash Village. Every time we went around a bend Ed would say, "this would be a nice place for a bridge." Ed has an incredible sense of humor, (part of why we've been together so long). We have gone through lots together and still he can make me laugh, we really needed a laugh at this point. We did come upon the bridge, Louie's truck was parked there waiting for us. Thank goodness, I knew there was a heater in that cab. We paddled up to the gravel landing and guess what? It started to SLEET and SNOW. Penny said, "Now you guys have experienced the true Allagash!"

We had paddled 62 miles and gone through: 4lbs of bacon, 4lbs of turkey, 4lbs of ham, 58 bottles of water, a lot of wine, one flask of scotch. We had done the Allagash, we had created memories, and made new friends, we saw too many constellations to count, and we had seen the blackest, inkiest, most profound night sky ever. We were later told, the day after we had left the Cunliff site a black bear and cub had been sighted there. One the best rewards was, we had earned the right to do the Maine Yell.

The end, rain, hail, sleet and snow!



Messing About in Boats, February 2010 – 17

Ian and I decided to undertake a cruise from Kyle of Lochalsh to Ullapool this summer. We intended to set off from the Kyle, arrive in Ullapool, and then catch buses and trains back to the Kyle to retrieve the car and trailer to recover the boat. However, as time approached for doing this cruise the weather predictions were mixed and we felt Ullapool was too far and maybe Gairloch should be a furthest north destination, as distances between suitable anchorages north of Torridon were large and if we got bad weather our options were limited, especially for recovering *Peregrine*, and there seemed to be more options for recovery on Skye.

From this we decided that we would sail as far north as Gairloch and then sail down the east side of Skye, pulling out at several possible sites. As it happened we managed to get back to the Kyle to pull out. I contacted the Kyle harbourmaster beforehand to discuss launching and storage of my car and trailer for the fortnight we would be sailing. He was very helpful and allowed us to store our car and trailer in the harbour port area (basically on the pier that the railway station is on) and that we were quite welcome to launch on the old ferry slipway.

We arrived at the Kyle just after midday on June 13 after an overnight stop in Glencoe to ease the lengthy tow north. The weather was overcast with occasional showers of rain, wind was non-existent. We went about launching *Peregrine* and once she was

## With Great Britain's Dinghy Cruisers

### The Land of the Cuckoos

By Paul Harrison  
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(This may seem to be a strange title for a tale about a dinghy cruise, but you will see during this article that, despite news reports that the cuckoo is becoming a rare bird in this country we found during this cruise, we were serenaded by these birds each night. So where is this land?)

moored to the pontoon next to the slip we started to pack away our clothing and supplies for the fortnight. I rang the harbourmaster, who appeared shortly in his car and asked me to follow him, and after weaving through the Kyle harbour roads I ended up on the railway pier where I parked my car and trailer. The harbourmaster then kindly took me back to my boat and advised me that if I

had any issues anywhere, give him a ring and he would try and help us, a very kind offer.

Tide was not favourable to get under the bridge until after 1500h so we waited, hoping for some wind. Eventually as more sunshine started to break through a little breeze from the northeast appeared, so leaving slightly early we set sail for the bridge. We ferry-glided across to Kyleakin and the wind then died completely again. On came the motor and we slowly motored under the bridge heading towards the Crowlin Islands. The sea was a mirror, a lovely turquoise colour in the sunshine, but as we motored slowly along, large black ominous clouds started building over Skye heading for the Kyle behind us. We could see this producing heavy rain over the Kyle, but there was also a danger of it consuming us as well, but somehow we managed to stay ahead of it just in the sunshine. It came within 20' of our stern peppering the sea with large rain drops. This soon passed us moving towards Plockton, producing wonderful rainbows over Loch Carron, God's promise to better weather, we'll see.

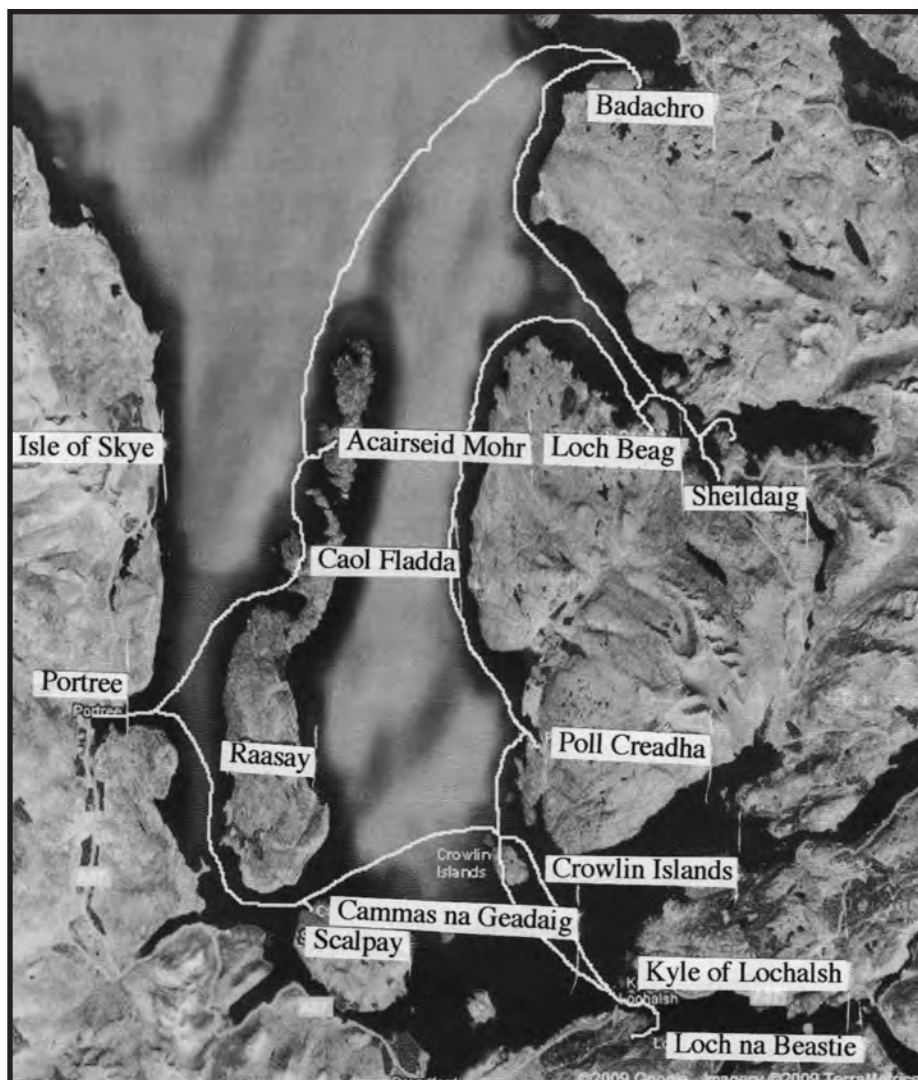
Suddenly a wind from the NNE appeared at about F2 and so at last we began to sail, tacking towards the south end of the Crowlin Islands and then tacked closely along the east shore towards the north end to gain the entrance to the harbour in between these islands. Eventually, after enough sailing for the day, we motored into this narrow defile where a couple of yachts were moored (neaps allowed enough water for yachts to access this sheltered harbour) and anchored ourselves. When we set about making our evening meal we heard our first cuckoo, joking how annoying it could be if it carried on all night!

We awoke to a sunny day, with a steady breeze from the SE, ideal for sailing further north. So with a leisurely breakfast we enjoyed the moment. Eventually one of the yachts set sail to run out of the anchorage, we started to prepare *Peregrine* to sail when, you guessed it, the wind swung to the NNW at about F2, so we took on the challenge of tacking out of the narrow defile and to weave between a couple of yachts anchored at the entrance to the harbour. We had decided that today was going to be short sail and our destination was Poll Creadha near Applecross.

We tacked from the Crowlin Islands to Eilean Na Ba and then onto Arban Point. We were tacking quite close to these shores to explore their nooks and crannies, however, I failed to notice that the tide and wind were pushing me closer to Arban Point than I intended and suddenly realised that we were in shallow water and passing over rocks. Ian was just about to say we had cleared them when I suddenly saw another field of rocks to windward and finally our luck ran out and our centreboard hit the last rock. Quickly I raised the centreboard and we were free. From this I decided at any sniff of shallow water we would avoid it, we were certainly lucky that we didn't do any serious damage.

The entrance to Poll Creadha is strewn with rocks and islands and poles attached to these rocks indicate the safe channel into this well-sheltered anchorage. We sailed between Eilean Nan Naomh and Ard-Dhubh and into the channel; we then motored to the head of Poll Creadha where we anchored. As we relaxed that evening we heard another cuckoo!

The following day was a lot cloudier, though it seemed brighter to the west, the



wind was a gentle F2 from the NW. Today was going to be a long sail to Loch Torridon, about 15nm in total. So we departed after 0900h and slowly tacked our way across Applecross Bay to Rubha na Guailne with a seal keeping tabs on us along the way. When we reached this point the sun was beginning to break through the clouds for longer periods but the wind seemed to come and go, so it was extremely slow sailing to Ru na Lachan, at this point all the wind died and the sea became a mirror. We engaged the motor and slowly motored north along the coast.

After we motored for a mile or so, the wind returned and we resumed sailing, the skies had become clearer and we were now enjoying long spells of sunshine. About 3nm from Rubh Na Fearn the wind suddenly swung to the NE at about F3/F4. Under full sail this became an exciting stomp on a close reach along the coast, our first real blast of speed to date. Eventually we rounded Rubh Na Fearn point into Loch Torridon and close-hauled we set off across Loch Torridon. Then suddenly the wind swung back to the NW F2 and we were now on a broad reach, but the seas were confused with the sudden wind shift and we had quite steep waves as waves were coming in two directions now. As we further entered Loch Torridon the wind was easing, but the seas were still lumpy and eventually we were not making much way so we resorted to using the motor.

With this wind direction I decided that Loch a Chraich might offer us good shelter, but as soon as I decided this the wind returned from the NE blowing about a F4, so I took a look in this loch and saw it offered us no shelter from this wind, thus we motored a bit further into Loch Beag and anchored at the head of this loch after maneuvering our way through all the fishing boats moored in this loch. It turned out to be very well sheltered but I was unsure what it would be like if a good NW wind was blowing. While relaxing and consuming our dinner we soon heard the loud and persistent tones of a cuckoo!

We awoke again to a sunny day, the wind being variable in strength from the SE. We decided to replenish our water supplies and so we decided to visit Shieldaig as this would be the best opportunity to do this. So we sailed out of the anchorage on a light breeze and headed for the narrow gap opening from Loch Torridon into Loch Shieldaig. In this gap all wind disappeared and we struggled for an hour sailing what zephyrs we got until we were truly in Loch Shieldaig, once we were there the wind began to increase to a good F3 and on a close reach we had a crackling sail towards the village of Sheildaig.

We went to the south end of the village to inspect the jetty, which in reality was a narrow slip; I didn't like the look of it to moor against and so decided to set up a running mooring on the beach before it. So with rubbish bag and water can we set off, only to find a tap at the steps leading off the beach we had moored to, so water was duly replenished. We soon found a bin for our rubbish and went to the hotel for a spot of lunch and a drink. While we were eating the wind shifted more to the south, making me slightly nervous as it would push *Peregrene* more onto the beach, so it was with some concern that we headed back to find that *Peregrene* was indeed on the beach and drying out.

With a quick push and a heave *Peregrene* was re-floated. From there we sailed on a broad reach and then a run into Upper

Loch Torridon, only to find headwinds when we should have been on a beam reach, but we tacked on past the fish farm with its strange-looking submarine conning tower into Camas An Leim. We found the wind all over the place and were regularly doing 360s at the end of the anchor. I don't know what it is about Loch Torridon and associated lochs, but I didn't feel comfortable there and I was looking to not hang around these lochs long but to get out of them as soon as possible. I don't know if it's their fearsome reputation for gusty winds, but I didn't feel happy in these lochs. As if to back up my fears we heard no cuckoo that night!

That night we had our first heavy rain which leaked through our tent, wetting both Ian and myself, and the morning didn't bring any respite, it just continued non-stop. So we stayed in bed until midday when it stopped. By now the weather forecasts for the next few days were beginning to make it imperative we got out of Loch Torridon or we could be stuck there for several days, and the forecasts being for westerly winds meant getting to Rona or Skye was out of the question as the angles for doing so from Loch Torridon were not good. From Gairloch it was possible, but it was going to be a long sail to Gairloch.

By 1500h we were ready to go, the wind was a brisk westerly F3, good for doing what I intended, so with one reef in we set off, tacking towards the exit of Upper Loch Torridon into Loch Shieldaig. As we approached this gap, a squall came through, increasing the wind to F5, making it an exciting fast sail, but I could see Ian was beginning to have doubts. I still thought I had enough alternative anchorages to go for if this became the norm, therefore was quite happy to push it further.

Again in the gap between Loch Shieldaig and Loch Torridon the wind disappeared and we were struggling to clear it. Fearful of wasting time I stuck the motor on to clear this gap, as soon as we cleared the gap the wind returned F3/F4 from the west and that gave me a close-hauled course all the way to Red Point which would take us clear from Loch Torridon, and turning north would put us onto a beam/broad reach to Gairloch.

This part of the sail to Red Point I enjoyed immensely, we would get squalls increasing the wind speeds up to F5 and we were screaming along, with spray everywhere and the sun shining in between. The waves were starting to get bigger so all my concentration was on the waves ahead, trying to judge the best course through them to avoid waves crashing into the boat, wetting both Ian and myself. I was not always successful at this and a few huge ones were taken! In my mind I felt that we would get to Red Point at 1800h, and that if it didn't look like we were going to make it by that time then I would turn back, or turn back if the weather or sea turned worse.

As it turned out, come 1800h we were not quite there, we had just cleared Sgeir na Train rock and still had just over a mile to the point, the sun was shining, the wind was about F4, the waves had increased to about 6', and a very dark set of clouds were gathering over Skye, but I decided to carry on, mainly on the thought we are nearly there and it will become easier once round the point, so I pressed on, not daring to say anything to Ian in case he changed my mind. I wanted out of this loch!

At 1830h we reached the point and started to turn onto a beam reach, as with all

headlands, the waves/swell was very large, a good 6' and all the time this dark mass, made all the darker by the sinking sun on top of it, was getting closer. I knew there would be strong winds under this cloud but I pressed on, trying to give myself a bit more sea room from the lee shore and to avoid the biggest waves. Suddenly the sun disappeared and all around a strange grey gloom descended, but no increase in wind, had we been lucky? No, soon after we were hit by the expected squall, *Peregrene* rounded into the wind climbing the huge waves, Ian shouting should we reduce sail? I quickly realised that there was no way we could put another reef in, especially in the current sea state, and not knowing how long this squall was going to last, and knowing we were not far off a lee shore, that the best course of action was to drop the main completely and sail under jib and mizzen alone as we were on a beam reach.

So Ian dropped the main while I tried to keep *Peregrene* steady and sailing for this to happen, in the ensuing chaos we lost our peak halyard as it was not held and as soon as the slack caught the sea it was pulled from its pulley at the top of the mast. So we wouldn't be using the main again that evening! But now everything was sedate again and we could relax as we now slowly sailed for Gairloch. Soon the wind died again and the sun reappeared, showing us wonderful rainbows over Gairloch. On entering Loch Gairloch we sailed for a sheltered anchorage at Badachro. We motored into this very sheltered and wonderful haven and anchored at about 2030h, to be greeted by a heavy rain shower to wet our boat completely before we managed to set the tent.

With tent up, we set about having something to eat as we were both cold and I apologising to Ian for putting him through the last few hours. As we ate our meal, before we dried the boat and went to bed, the welcoming calls of a cuckoo could be heard!

That night the wind blew and the rain came, and for all the next day it was blowing F6 gusting F7 with sunshine and showers. Too much to try and go ashore; between one set of showers I managed to place some strategic bits of gaffer tape to hold the tent down better to stop it leaking. We spent the day in bed reading books and sleeping!

Friday was not much better but the wind had died sufficiently for us to make the shore, where we then went to the Badachro Inn for lunch and shelter, by the afternoon the rain had stopped and the sun was shining so we returned to *Peregrene* to dry off what we could and to read some more. So a whole two days were spent at Badachro storm-bound.

The next morning the wind had died to a F2 from the WNW, which I believed would get us around the north end of Rona as we had decided to try and get to Acairseid Mhor on Rona. But first we motored to the pier to re-thread our halyard without having to take down our mast and then motored out of Badachro into Loch Gairloch and hoisted sails. It was about 1000h. We slowly tacked our way out of Loch Gairloch until we got an angle for Rona. The weather was cloudy, but blue bits were beginning to appear from the west.

On we sailed in a different world from Wednesday evening, with a calm sea and a gentle breeze. As it always seems to do, as the blue sky got more extensive and we were bathed in more sunshine the wind died away to almost nothing, but we still kept getting zephyrs to keep us going in the general direc-

tion. Eventually as we got nearer Rona the wind returned to a good F2 and the north end of Rona was soon made.

As we sailed down the west side of Rona we saw a minke whale close to us feeding and there seemed to be lots of shoals of fish around as we were entertained with the superb diving techniques of gannets who in their numbers were dive-bombing these shoals. Eventually we reached Acairseid Mhor, and as we had a favourable wind we sailed into the anchorage and anchored close to the north shore to watch herons squabbling in the trees, a buzzard flying amongst the trees being harried by crows, and, of course, we were not disappointed as we again heard the calls of another cuckoo.

Sunday morning was a cloudy affair with the wind now blowing from the south at about F2/F3 which would eventually increase to a F4. We decided for a short sail today as we would be tacking to go in the direction we wished to go, so we set our destination to be Caol Fladda, which is a channel between Raasay and Eilean Fladday, which has a causeway connecting both islands together at low tide. So with a rare two reefs in we set sail and slowly tacked the four miles to our destination. Today Skye was living up to its other name of the Misty Isle as a lot of cloud was settled over and on Skye.

As we approached our destination I was unsure if we would have much shelter as the channel runs north/south and the wind was from the south, but as we motored right up to the causeway it seemed suitable for us to stay in, it is quite deep in the channel, but near the causeway there are some sand patches 2-3 metres down which provide good anchoring.

Once all sails were stored and tent raised, and it was after low water, we decided to land on the causeway and go exploring. Once landed we had a short debate on how much water would be over the causeway at high water before exploring; on the south side of the causeway there was a walled square area that would be completely covered it high water. We couldn't work out its purpose! (It was an old ceridh-rom kerry, a fish trap.) After visiting the crofts on the island we returned to the causeway where we set cairns to indicate where there was enough water to pass over the causeway.

We returned to our boat and re-anchored to watch the tide come in. I also suggested that I measure the depth of water where we were anchored as the water went over the top of the causeway and then every hour until high water to give us the depth of water over the causeway. It turned out that we would have at least 5' over the causeway 1½ hours either side of high water (this was halfway between neaps and springs). We decided to take a bearing to give us the deepest channel and safest passage over the causeway, this is where the fun started, Ian was getting 215 where as I was getting 225. Come what may, everything we tried, including swapping places, we still had different readings until I twigged my glasses were interfering! Once the glasses were removed we agreed the bearing was 215.

Again, while we sat on the boat debating depths and bearings we could hear our favourite bird, the cuckoo; we were beginning to wonder if one was following us! Eventually as high water approached my cairn had disappeared and at high water Ian's had only the topmost stone showing. We had decided that Portree was our next destination as we

needed more water and supplies and as the wind forecast for the following day was similar and therefore we would be tacking all the way to Portree we needed to cross the causeway in the morning to cut out several miles of tacking, so this would have to be done anywhere between 0530h and 0830h.

So Ian, keen to get over the causeway, was up at 0500h whereas I stubbornly refused to move until nearer 0600, whereby we crossed the causeway at 0600h with tent still up and re-anchored and had breakfast. The morning was very overcast with rain threatening, the wind in the SW blowing F2/F3. We started tacking out round the south side of Fladday at about 0800h, avoiding all the rocky reefs until we were safely into the Sound of Raasay. At this point the weather deteriorated further and the Misty Isle, living up to its name, completely disappeared, including our destination. The rain started coming down and even Raasay was becoming difficult to see, so we simply tacked one way for ten minutes and then the other way for ten minutes and so on, knowing that by doing this we would eventually be in the entrance loch for Portree.

Eventually a shaft of sunlight briefly panned its way across us and the misty shroud over the entrance to Portree began to be drawn back and the smiling cliff face on the south side of the entrance was grinning at us as we sailed into the entrance loch of Portree. The wind died while in here and as we were now cold and wet we decided to motor the last bit into Portree Harbour where we moored alongside the pier at 1200h which was well exposed as the tide was nearly out. The sun came out and gladly warmed our bones before we set off to explore Portree to do some shopping and have a fish and chip lunch.

That afternoon we anchored in several places, in the first we got a sideways chop which was very uncomfortable (near the sailing club on the north side of the bay), the second (around from Vriskaig Point) was exposed to the NE, and even though the wind was blowing in the SW everywhere else, in this bay it was blowing from the NE, weird! Finally we returned to the harbour and anchored just off Sron nan Cudai-gan between the moorings and the shore. No cuckoo was heard that night.

The next morning we awoke to a glorious sunny day with the wind blowing from the SSW at about F1/F2. We had superb views of the Cuillins with the last of the morning mist curling off the tops to leave a crisp view against the pale blue sky. We set sail at 0900h and sailed from the anchor slowly out of Portree, tacking along the south shore of the entrance Loch to Portree. We sailed quite close to the steep southern shore looking at the caves and bird life living there, when Ian announced he could hear a cuckoo. It took a while before I heard it, so Portree had a cuckoo after all!

As we sailed around the point into the Sound of Raasay we were joined by three local wildlife tour boats full of people with long range lenses and binoculars and they congregated off the Smiley face cliff of Udairn. I began to think that there must be a sea eagle about, so we tacked amongst the boats looking to see if we could see the sea eagle. One of the boats threw a fish into the water and almost immediately this huge bird of prey soared into view and flew past the boats before returning to the shore, but it was soon out again and this time it took the fish, fantastic!

We carried on sailing down the Sound of Raasay with a nice F2 heading towards Ardhuish on Raasay where I was thinking of anchoring for the night. We were within a mile of this when Ian suggested that as it was 1200h and we had a nice wind we should carry on to the Crowlin Islands. I warned him it would be a long sail and there was no guarantee that this wind would remain. With this said Ian started to have second thoughts, but the challenge had been made so I altered course to head us more over to the channel to take us through the Raasay Narrows. You guessed it, the wind died and became variable so we drifted slowly towards the narrows and occasionally resorted to rowing when there were no zephyrs to sail in.

Once we were through the narrows the wind picked up again to F1/F2 from the south, so we slowly tacked towards the bottom of Raasay. It was now getting towards late afternoon and I had a feeling there was no wind the other side of Raasay or it would be on the nose making the Crowlin Islands impossible to get to. Sure enough, as we entered the Sound between Raasay and Scalpay the wind became easterly and the sea looked to have no wind towards the Crowlin Islands, so we decided to anchor at Camas na Geadraig on the northern tip of Scalpay. This was a nice sheltered bay with a lovely sandy bottom for anchoring.

Just after we anchored the wind increased to F3/F4 from the NNE, albeit while we were sheltered from the wind a bit of sea was running into the bay making it slightly uncomfortable. We had a glorious sunny evening sitting at the back of the boat soaking up the sun eating our dinner. The wind was moving around in all directions while we sat there quite dizzy with the boat spinning round to take up new positions as the wind changed. Eventually everything settled down as the wind steadied in the SE.

Wednesday morning we again had another glorious sunny morning, promising to be hot. We decided to have a leisurely morning and try and catch a sea breeze about 1100h, so we landed on the beach and anchored *Peregrine* just off the beach while we explored the area. A breeze from the NE began to appear, so thinking this might be the start of the sea breeze we set sail and tacked out of the bay and turned east to head to the Crowlin Islands, at which point the wind died and so we slowly drifted along the coast of Scalpay, which was when we heard a cuckoo, phew, Scalpay had a cuckoo as well!

Eventually we broke out the oars and started rowing towards Sg Dhearg, it was surprising how the current was taking us towards these rocks and we regularly had to row away from them to ensure we passed them to the south. By now it was early afternoon and hot and the sea was a mirror and no sign of a sea breeze, I could not understand why one was not appearing, typical clouds were bubbling up over the land but no wind appeared. So we spent the afternoon taking it in turns rowing with an occasional zephyr sailing towards the Crowlin Islands.

As we approached the Crowlin Islands a dark line on the horizon to the north began to appear, this dark line slowly got thicker, ahhh, wind is coming, and so at about 1600h we were hit with a F3/F4 wind from the NW, blimey that's a late sea breeze! So at last we could sail, but we were within a half a mile of the Crowlin Islands so we tacked up along the west side of the islands to the north end



to get round the top to get into the anchorage. We were at springs now just after low water and we could see a reef extending quite a long way off the NE corner of the island so we ensured we gave ourselves plenty of clearance as we sailed round the north end of the islands.

Having used this anchorage at the start of our holiday I was quite happy to sail straight into the harbour between the islands, I knew the entrance would be a lot narrower and shallower as it was springs now and low tide, but was confident there would be plenty of water for us. As we approached the entrance we scandalized the main and sailed with just the jib, even like this we shot into the narrows at a great speed as the tide seemed to be rushing in as well. I started to worry as it suddenly became shallow and the bottom seemed to keep coming up, and if a rock appeared there was no way I could stop so fingers crossed and breaths held we sailed ever onwards into the narrows, suddenly it went deep as we entered the harbour and we both breathed easily again. We anchored in the middle at about 1630h.

The next morning we intended to have a leisurely start and sail to Loch na Beastie opposite Kyle before pulling out on the Friday morning. However, just as the beans were on the cooker for breakfast we ran out of gas! So quickly working out tides we decided that we needed to be away by 0900h to get the tide through the Skye Bridge to get us to Kyle of Lochalsh to allow us to get something to eat for our evening meal on shore as we had no gas to cook now. As it was high tide we decided to exit the harbour over the bar to the south.

The wind was blowing a good F2/F3 from the southeast so we hoisted sails and motored out of the Crowlin Islands before heading towards the Skye Bridge on a close reach.

We had a cracking sail towards the bridge, but as we approached it the wind swung more southerly and decreased in strength so we had to tack through the bridge with the tide aiding us, and soon we were on the pontoon at Kyle of Lochalsh for about 1200h. We spent the afternoon exploring Kyle of Lochalsh, including the railway museum as well as having something cooked to eat at a local cafe as we would not be able to cook anything tonight.

At about 1700h we set sail for Loch na Beastie to spend the night opposite Kyle of Lochalsh. We couldn't help going to this place with a name like this, but no Beasties were seen, however, lots of mackerel were jumping out of the water and a local fisherman was pulling them out with ease, trust our luck, the only time we might have caught fish we had no line or gas to cook them! We anchored in about 5m of water at the head of the loch, knowing it was springs I didn't want to risk drying out with the expected wind blowing into this loch. As we settled down for the night we were not let down by hearing the sound of our final cuckoo.

During the night the wind picked up for a while and it got a bit bouncy but died again, however at 0500h the wind picked up again and I was woken by a bump as we grounded, the tide went out further than expected so we pulled ourselves off a bit as it was just after low tide. With being awake we decided to have our cold breakfast and then set sail to

the Kyle to pull out. The wind was a F2 easterly and so we had quite an exciting morning sail out of Loch na Beastie and across to the pontoon at Kyle of Lochalsh.

So finally we had completed our trip, we had managed to sail 112nm, mostly under sail, with not a lot of favourable wind directions. We had reasonable weather and with wonderful views of both scenery and wildlife throughout the trip, including a cuckoo in every port (nearly). Some might say we were cuckoo to do this but it was enjoyable, however, there were times when sheltered anchorages were thin on the ground making it harder to sail if the weather was not suitable or meant longer passages had to be endured to ensure a safe anchorage could be made.

(*Peregrine* is a Suffolk beach punt and is rigged as a gaff yawl. She is 16' long and has a 6'6" beam. She is an open boat with a boom tent to allow us to sleep on her and has plenty of covered storage for camping, personal, and sailing equipment. She has a steel centerboard and a deep skeg. She is built using marine plywood and painted. She was built in 1996 by Lakeland Wooden Boats).

### For More Information About the DCA

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Caol Fladda



Camas na Geadiag



The vacation I like best is one that gives me fresh insight into the way people live. If the environment is unusual, so much the better. It is not ease and rest, nor is it mountain scenery or the smell of salt water that gives me most pleasure, but the chance to live for a time amid new surroundings with those who gain their livelihood by working with their hands. The hand workers, as contrasted with the brain workers, possess a peculiar attraction, partly because they are the largest class and make the bone and sinew of every nation, partly because they are comparatively unartificial and have a never failing smack of picturesqueness that grows naturally out of their habits and surroundings.

Ever since I have known the Hudson as a real live river and not simply as a crooked streak on the map, I have had the wish for a closer acquaintance with the life on the canal boats, whose long, lazy tows are one of the stream's notable features. Each evening, in the warm weather months, a tow of these deep-laden craft just out from the Erie Canal leaves Albany for New York. The Hudson, in its journey to the sea, makes barely eight miles a day. It is too slow even for the canal boats and they always make the trip back and forth in the wake of a steam vessel. As you look from the shores you see people on the boats, you see little cabins at the sterns with stovepipes sticking out of the roofs, and you see many lines of washing flying. The tows, indeed, are floating villages and there is a touch of romance about them that stirs the gypsy blood in one at once.

At any rate, with me, the impulse to go was very strong. Here was the chance to see a novel phase of life, and that amid the famous scenery of the Hudson. If the canal boat folk would take me, I would make one trip down the river, at least.

It was late in the afternoon and I was in Albany wandering along the wharves. The day was dull and, to a stranger, the high, rusty warehouses and breweries flanking the river were depressing. A number of canal boats were moored alongshore, some low and snug, some loaded high with an unwieldy bulk of lumber or hay. There was not much going on aboard them, just two or three men in sight doing odd jobs about the decks, and a woman in a pink waist standing at a cabin door and looking out on the river. The only attention I got was from a lad dozing on a cabin roof who, at sight of my valise, roused up and asked what I was peddling. Things were equally quiet on the wharves. A few boys and men were loitering about, but there was no stir, no activity, not even in the vicinity of the frequent corner saloons.

I was half wishing to give up the trip when three canal boats arrived from up the river and the tug in charge pushed them in to the wharf near where I stood. I spoke with a man who jumped on shore with a rope and he pointed out one of the rough, sunburned workmen on the boats and said that was the "captain," he was the man who owned the three boats, and if I wanted to go to New York he was the one to talk with.

The captain, who in dress and looks was no different from his fellows, proved friendly and was perfectly willing I should go down the Hudson on his vessels. I offered to pay my fare but he said, "no!" emphatically and added, "I don't want any money. It's no trouble. Most of my crew left when we got to the end of the canal and there's room enough. But you'll have to take things as they are.

## A Canal Boat Voyage on the Hudson

By Clifton Johnson  
With Illustrations by the Author  
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(Submitted by Richard Winslow)

I can't answer for what your bed will be. Like enough it isn't fit for you, and then again it maybe all right. It's just as the men left it, and they're sometimes pretty dirty fellows."

But I could go. That was a relief, for the uncertainty of ways and means when one is starting out on such an expedition always keeps one's spirits at a low ebb. I did not worry much over possible hardships.

"I don't know how you'll manage about your meals," the captain continued. "Usually I have my wife and children along, but this time I've got a housekeeper. My wife took sick last month and she stayed at home this trip; so I had to get Mrs Libbey to cook and tend to the other work and I don't know how she'll feel about taking a boarder. Perhaps she'll think she has enough to do now. You'll have to fix that with her. The best way is to speak to her yourself when you find her out on deck. If she don't want the job, why you can get all you want to eat tomorrow from the bumboats."

With this the captain turned to his work. I did not want to run the risk of going hungry till tomorrow and leave the chance of getting something then to the "bumboats," whatever those might be. So I went on shore and visited a meager little grocery not far away, where I bought a supply of cookies and a can of salmon. With these I thought I could hold body and soul together the entire trip if necessary.

The weather was threatening and evening came early. Lanterns were lit on the boats and lights twinkled out one by one all about the river and along the shores. Presently a horn blew and the captain and the two men, "Duncan" and "Hugh," who made up the river crew, strolled down into Mrs Libbey's cabin on the best boat to have supper. I was on the point of going after my can of salmon and bag of cookies when the captain reappeared and invited me to come in and eat with the others. He said he had fixed things with Mrs Libbey, and I could pay her for my board whatever I saw fit when we reached New York.

Dinner!



I preferred to be one of the family and I followed the captain's lead and crooked myself down into the cabin. The ceiling barely missed one's head, the walls were honeycombed with cupboards and drawers, and there was a folding bed in one corner and a cook stove in another. The floor was covered with oilcloth and the whole place was neat and orderly. The table filled the middle of the room. Most of the chairs were nothing but backless campstools that could be closed up and tucked away when not in use. The table was not so large but that everything on it could be reached without much stretching and I was invited to draw up and help myself. We had beans, meat, potato, bread and butter, crackers, and tea. The fare right through the voyage was plain and coarse but not unwholesome. The canal boat people were inclined to neglect their forks as conveyances for food, and each reached his own knife to the butter plate from time to time. However, these things are not peculiar to canal boats. We four men left little spare room at the table and Mrs Libbey sat back near the stove and chatted and saw that our cups were kept filled with tea.

By the time I returned to the deck preparations were being made to start. Dusky figures were moving about here and there on the boats and on the wharves. A short, slouch-hatted man, with much swearing and violence of manner, was making up the tow. There were many lights on the river, yellow, red, and green. Tugs were moving here and there whistling and puffing, and in the hazy air of the half-clouded evening the scene seemed full of movement, mystery, and strange noises.

At eight a great steamer just starting for New York left its pier a quarter of a mile above and its mountain of lights drifted down past us. Except for the tall smokestacks towering above the pile, its size and its wealth of glow and glitter made it seem, as seen from the humble canal boat, a veritable "floating palace." On an upper deck was a searchlight peering about with its one eye, flashing its bit of vivid illumination now on this side the river, now on the other, bringing out the color and form of all it touched with astonishing clearness amid the surrounding night. As soon as the steamer reached the open river its engines began to pant and it soon vanished on its swift course southward.

Shortly afterwards the shorelines of our tow of canal boats were cast loose and we, too, were on our way down the river. But ours was not the easy flight of the brilliant passenger boat that preceded us. Our long, clumsy tow was being dragged through the gray evening gloom by a single stout steamer and the blunt, deep-laden canal boats plowed their way through the dun waters very heavily. In our rear the sparkle of the city lights slowly faded and the glows in home windows on the wooded shores grew fewer and farther between. Responsibility for the night was now past and it was not long before everybody turned in.

Our tow included between 30 and 40 boats made up in tiers of four abreast. The boats in each tier were snug together, and though they sometimes swung apart a foot or two, there was never much difficulty in stepping from one to the other. The captain I had adopted owned three of the boats in our tier, and the odd one was in charge of an elderly Frenchman, his wife, two dogs, and a cat.

I had a bunk in a little cabin at the rear of the middle one of our three boats. This cabin was a kind of storeroom, a catch-all for every sort of rubbish. Here were pieces of harness, castoff clothing, rags, tools, bolts, kerosene cans, a tub of paint, etc. It had various odors and these were not improved when Duncan, my fellow roomer, lit a stout tin lamp and turned it low to burn all night. The apartment was mostly below decks and as for ventilation, one could about as well have slept in a drygoods box with the cover on.

My bunk looked short but there proved to be a recess in the farther wall where I could stow away my feet. It was a bed without linen, and the coarse blankets and bed ticking pillow looked so uninviting that I concluded to sleep on top in the clothes I had on. A curtain was strung on a wire along the front of the bunk. This I drew and, with the dim light of the lamp shining through it, and with the swash of the water around the stern of the boat in my ears, I went to sleep. On the whole things were very quiet and, though the boat rolled a little and now and then softly bumped against its neighbor, the motion was so slight and we slipped along so smoothly that it was hardly different from being on land.

When I clambered out on deck a little before 6am the next day, the weather was still dubious and during the morning we had frequent scuds of rain. Toward noon a thunderstorm came rumbling down on us from the Catskills, but after that the sky showed signs of clearing and the head wind which had been tossing the waves into whitecaps grew quieter.

Right after breakfast Mrs Libbey had cleared everything out of her cabin that could be cleared out, set up her washtub, and gone to washing. I suppose every other woman on the tow did likewise. The first day on the Hudson is always washing day, for on the second day the boats are in salt water which sets back a hundred miles up the river. In the brighter spells between showers, clotheslines had been set up on the decks and a few garments swung on them; but with the first streak of sunshine after the thunderstorm tubs were brought up, lines filled, and surplus garments were spread all about. The boats with all this bunting had quite a gala air.

The first work of the day for the men was to feed and care for the horses, which were in low stable cabins at the bow of the boats. The trip back and forth on the Hudson and the stay in New York are vacation for the horses. In spite of the narrowness of their quarters, they seemed contented enough, yet it moved one's pity to see their galled shoulders. The horses would cringe and plunge when the men touched their sores to wash them or rub on oil.

Our fleet carried seven horses. On the canal they worked in two relays, three horses in one and four in the other. The boats kept going night and day and it was steady work for the horses, six hours on and six hours off for all the week and a half it took to go through the canal. Their shoulders are very tender and Duncan said, "Some of the horses, after they have had their rest and start in to work again, will rear and kick, and it's all you can do to make them buckle down to pull, they're just that mean in disposition. Still, you can't blame 'em. They're just like folks, and a man with a sore toe would act worse 'n they do. You see, their collars are bearing on their shoulders all the time for six hours and the chafing makes so much heat that, with the sweat, it scalds them. If they could only stop

once in a while and have the collars lifted up so's to let the air under, they'd be all right."

The horses undoubtedly have a hard time on the towpath and it is the destiny of very many of them to be drowned by being dragged into the water by a fouled tow-line. When boats are passing each other and the line gets caught, unless it is unsnapped at once, in go the horses. Sometimes the owners go in after the horses and try to cut them loose, but it is dangerous business.

After the men finished caring for the horses, they turned their attention to cleaning the decks. They dipped up great quantities of water and dashed it all about the premises and then scoured off everything with their brooms. This is a before breakfast task of daily recurrence. The plentifulness of the water supply seems to give the canal boat folk the same mania for scrubbing that the Dutch have in Holland. They used it copiously for everything. When a man washed his face he dipped up a brimming pail for the purpose, and I suppose he would have used another pailful to brush his teeth in, only that is an attention to the toilet generally dispensed with on the canal craft.



Swabbing.

The general work of the day consisted in doing odd jobs of tinkering, putting things in order, pumping the water out of boats that leaked, mending harness, etc. But there was plenty of leisure and there was a great deal of lounging and visiting. Hugh and Duncan found time to attend to various affairs of their own and to read several chapters in some ragged paper novels. Hugh, just before he settled down to reading, invited me to call on him. He had slicked up the cabin where he slept and had given its atmosphere an individuality of its own by fumigating it with sulphur for the benefit of the cockroaches.

Besides, he had scoured or mopped it out after some fashion and it was so damp and chilly that he now concluded he would start a fire. He had tried to improve the appearance of his rust-coated stove by going over it with kerosene, and when he kindled



Repairing the harness.

the fire its oil-soaked surface began to smoke. In the depressions of the covers intended for the insertion of the stove-handle the kerosene had gathered in little pools, and from these slim tongues of flame leaped up. It was a curious looking stove and it sent out a curious smelling smudge, but Hugh took it calmly. He was a great, stout, hardy fellow, not to be disturbed by trifles. He said he was going to the Klondike in the spring and already could see himself in his mind's eye picking up the "gold nuggets there."

About ten o'clock in the morning I had a chance to find out what a bumboat was. It came from some town on the distant shore, a rusty little steamer, not much larger than a good-sized rowboat, peddling vegetables, fruits, butter, milk, and, in the season, ice cream and bottled drinks. It crept up to us with a slender piping of its infantile whistle fastened to the front tier of boats, did what trading it could, then cast loose and, with another announcement of attenuated toots, dropped back to the next tier.

Our tow was a little world in itself. These bumboats constituted our only connection with the rest of mankind and the excitements of the voyage are so few that their visits were always welcome. The bumboats make the tows their chief source of income, but they also do trading along the wharves of their home towns and of villages neighboring.

Each tier of the tow is separated from that in front and behind by 6'-8' of water. The space is spanned by a few strands of rope, but this makes so slight a connection that sociability with neighbors who precede or follow is to a large extent cut off. A man, if he chooses, can put one leg over a rope and hitch himself across the vacancy, but not many attempt this. Our captain was the only one I saw do it. I don't suppose there was any special danger, but I would prefer to have something else below me than that turmoil of water if I were to follow his example. He had put on a dress coat right after dinner and crossed the rope, and spent half the afternoon roosted on a cabin roof talking with Captain Jones, who owned two boats in the tier ahead of us.

Our social intercourse was mostly with the old Frenchman and his wife, who owned

the rusty iceboat in our tier. Our folks visited with them back and forth by the hour. His strong point was politeness and hers talkativeness. They did a great deal of scrubbing during the day and in the afternoon, when there was danger of running short of material to exercise their scrubbing energy on, the wife brought out a rug of Brussels carpeting and laid it on the cabin roof. The husband looked at her doubtfully out of the corner of his eye when she poured a pail of water over it. Then she rubbed on soap and scoured it in with a brush, and next squeezed the water out with a bit of wood.

After that she began at the beginning again with the pouring on of water, and so she continued, as if bent on wearing the rug out. The man saw his roof getting dirty and mounted it with his broom, and swept it almost as assiduously as his wife scoured the carpet. Now and then he would pause and look at her speculatively, as if it was beyond his ken what his wife's real intentions were with regard to that carpet. Once he inquired, mildly, if it wouldn't get dirty again, and she said, yes, it would be just as bad as ever in a week. At this the man looked a shade downcast but he did not venture to question the wisdom of the labor. His wife scolded him well from time to time for his clumsiness. He was rather stiff, but he meant well, and I thought she had an exaggerated idea of his incapacity. He had a placating tone and a placating manner but it was apparently all lost on the woman.

It is not simply men who live on the tows, but whole families, from babies up to grandmothers, and it seemed to me that, being always on the water, they were subject to peculiar dangers. I asked Duncan about this. It was in one of the morning showers and he had got a pailful of suds from Mrs Libby and brought it over to our cabin to do some washing. He fixed up a seat, put his dirty garments in the pail and, after expressing a longing for a washboard, scrubbed the clothes out on his knuckles. He said Mrs Libbey was willing enough to wash for him but he didn't want to be beholden to her. "If she did favors for me, I'd have to do 'em for her, and if I shouldn't, why, she'd chin about it somewhere."

In reply to my question he told how, two years before, two girls lost their lives. "They danced overboard," he said. "There was a fiddle playin' on the tier ahead and they caught hold of each other for a little waltz, and one of them stepped over the side and clung to the other, and they both went in and were drowned." When he finished this story, Duncan got up and put his head out of the hatchway.

"Come here a minute," said he. "You see that long, rocky island we're comin' to with the woods on it? Well, it was right about opposite to that I had a child of mine drowned. I owned a boat in those days and my wife and three children were on board. There was a bumboat come up alongside the outer boat and I went along ahead with one of the children, and my driver took my little girl and we were goin' to buy the children some candy, and when the man was steppin' across from one boat to another it must 'a been the boats pulled apart and he didn't calculate right and in they went. I never see it happen and then I heard some one cry out there was a man overboard. We got the man out but the girl never rose. She must 'a went in under the boats."

"We couldn't stop the tow and I got off on the bumboat and stayed behind. It was eight days before we found the body. She'd

be 17 years old now, if she'd lived. That sickened my wife of boating. She was always afraid we'd be losing our other two children, so I sold out and bought a little ten-acre farm. I got six children now and my wife thinks we better give 'em some education money'n they could get on the canal, and I earn money summers boating and she runs the farm with the children, and I guess we'll give 'em some schoolin'. I didn't get much myself. I went on the canal when I was ten, and after I got boatin' you couldn't dog me off it. Well, I tell you, I get \$35 a month and board and it's a steady job. There ain't many things you could do better in."

With this he wrung out the pair of trousers he had been at work on and carried them outside and hung them on the swaying rudder handle.

There was no pause in our voyage. Night and day alike we continued to toil steadily southward. The steamer dragging us by three sagging towropes was so far on ahead that no sound came to its from it save when it whistled but we could see the measured sway of its walking beam, the water breaking into foam beneath its paddles, and the smoke drifting away from its tall chimneys.

On the morning of the third day, when I looked out soon after sunrise, I found New York in sight, dim in the hazy south. We were passing the last of the Palisades and I regretted to think that during the night we had gone by much of the river's finest scenery. The most impressive view of the trip was one I had had at Storm King the evening before, and I doubt if the whole length of the river affords anything finer. We had passed Newburg with its multitude of lights, and I had gone below to while away the evening when the captain called to me. I had not thought the Highlands so near and the sight from the deck was a surprise. The river had narrowed and a rugged mountain shouldered up into the sky on either hand. The full moon sailed among the clouds and the great cliffs frowning down on our gloomy line of canal boats were very striking and powerful.

Through the early voyage the shores were monotonous and, lower down where we should have seen the blue ranges of the Catskills, the mists shrouded the distance completely. Frequent residences looked out on us from the wooded banks and now and then we passed a town. Often a great icehouse would loom up at the water's edge, and on both sides of the river were lines of railroad tracks where the trains at close intervals were speeding along, sending out to us the faint rumble of their wheels and the sharp notes of their whistles. These were the chief land features, while the river itself was so vast that until we neared New York the craft on it were so few and far between that it seemed lonely.

We had New York in sight at dawn but the tide was against us and it took all the morning to reach our destination at the lower end of the city. The sun shone clear and hot and the glare of the white paint, added to the heat, made the exposed deck rather uncomfortable. Still, there was a fascination about the approach to the city that made it impossible to stay long in the cabins. The multitude of buildings, the shipping that crowded the miles of wharves and filled the wide river with the coming and going of vessels of all sorts and sizes, roused us and kept our interest on tiptoe.

One member of our boat's company I had seen little of heretofore, but today he was

much in evidence. This was a young man who was a passenger like myself, only he was wholly penniless and slept under a manger among the horses. He was a seedy, shiftless-looking fellow and he had dozed away most of the voyage under the manger. Hugh said the man was "working" his way to New York, but that must have been a metaphor for I never saw him do anything that looked like labor. The day before I had learned that he had had nothing to eat since we left Albany and that moved me to crawl down into his stable-cabin and offer my cookies and can of salmon. He accepted hungrily and began to eat at once just where he was, under the manger.

This last day he showed more spirit and was out on deck in the sun watching the city with considerable interest. He talked with the crew freely and spoke of himself as a "prodigal son." He said his father was a New York broker and a man of wealth. He could imagine him with his arms open to receive him and ready to put a ring on his finger and kill the fatted calf. "It is more likely, though," he added, "that I'm the fatted calf that'll get killed. Still, I haven't bothered the old gent for over a year now and he ought to be thankful for that."

There was a general effort on the part of the inhabitants of the tow to make a good appearance in our approach to the metropolis. Clotheslines were taken in; the rough, everyday working garments were changed for better, and most of the men took pains to shave. When you saw them at their best they were by no means unattractive.

On the whole, I got an agreeable impression of the canal boat folk. There was a home air about them that was unexpected. They were hard working and thrifty and the drinking habit was the exception rather than the rule. It is true the men swore a good deal in their ordinary conversation, but they did it with no air of profanity. It was just an oil to the flow of their remarks. In their feeling it apparently made what they said clearer and themselves more companionable. The women, too, made free with slang and even rougher expressions, yet they were not without a certain refinement.

Our captain was probably a fair example of the successful canal boatman. He was an Irish Catholic, had started on the canal as a driver when ten years old. Now, at the age of 35, he owned three boats that were worth on an average \$2,000 each, and a 15-acre farm. The farm produces hay enough to winter his horses and 20 others, and he values it at \$5,000.

There is a rougher element on the canal, these are the "trippers," men hired as drivers just for the passage through the canal. They are often hard characters with no more clothes than they wear on their backs and, as soon as they are paid off, take a vacation and spend all their gains in a spree before they go to work again. But it is only the sober men who ever work up to the ownership of boats.

Most captains pay no attention to Sundays, yet there are those who tie up on the Sabbath and go to church. They will even lose three or four hours of Saturday rather than be where there is no church. But wages go on Sunday the same as weekdays and the average man sees a clear loss of five or six dollars in tying up and he thinks he can't afford it.

Some of the families winter on their boats lying at the wharves in New York City, and they say they do it very comfortably.



Mrs Libbey told of a friend who tried living in a tenement instead. The family paid \$18 a month rent and it was a crowded, stifling little place, not nearly so good as a canal boat.

The freighting season lasts from May to December and in the cold weather the majority of the boat folk are at their home villages in central New York. They don't work very hard in winter, they said, but just dress well and have

a good time. The women, in particular, enjoy the winter. "The summer," said Hugh, "is all rain for them, but the winter is all sunshine."

The men mostly marry girls brought up on the canal, and when they do pick out a city girl they are apt to regret it for she isn't usually fitted for the life and "can't get to like it."

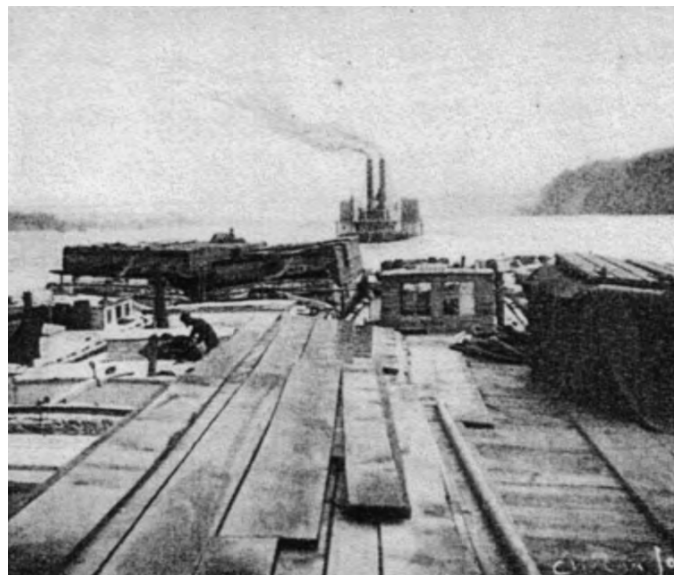
Noon came and we were opposite the picturesque jumble of lofty buildings at the

lower end of the city. A little later we were making fast to a pier down near the Battery and I prepared to leave. Personally I had received only kindness and hospitality on the trip, and the voyage had held so much that was novel and interesting that it was with real regret that I left the canal boats and became an ordinary landsman once more.

Passing the Palisades.



Looking up the Hudson.



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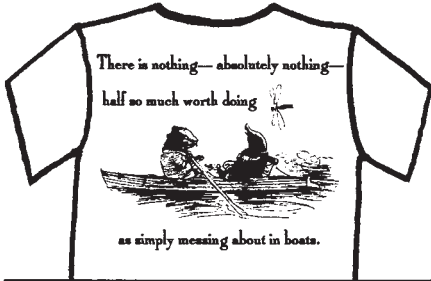
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I don't really remember when I started to get the urge to row, I know some time in high school I really started wanting to. Then one summer, I think it was the one between sophomore and junior years, I saw a short article in the local paper about a new rowing club in Salisbury, Massachusetts. I rode my bike over and joined.

I discovered a few guys from my high school were in the club and that Pike Messenger, one of the biology teachers from Triton, was one of the adult leaders. Pike got us out rowing each Friday after school and before long Chris, the guy who got us the old Rings Island Firehouse for our clubhouse, said I was ready to go rowing on my own.

### My First Trip Around Plum Island

At the time I joined the club we had four large heavy plywood dories that Pike had built as a shop class back when my high school, Triton Regional, was first opened. They were as old as me and still doing fine, I have since heard they are no more, the school had not used them in years and sold them to RIRC for \$1 each or something like that. At the time I didn't know that each boat was different, they all looked the same and I didn't have any preference for which one I took.

I left the slip at Rings Island early Saturday morning. I had a water bottle, a box of Cheese-Its, and a few empty water ballast jugs. I didn't know I had taken the biggest and heaviest boat of the four, the one we later came to call the "bathtub." I caught the outgoing tide and made it to the mouth of the Merrimack in good time. We had rowed to the mouth a few times now so I thought I had a good idea of how it was shaped. I didn't count on the slow handling of a dory, though, and ended up surfing over the sandbar on the Plum Island side of the mouth. It was then a case of the boat design saving my bacon, I shot between the jetties and out to sea.

I started rowing as hard as I could to get out of the 9kt current but ended up a good ways offshore, it was interesting to ride the pressure waves from the river, they were so high I lost sight of land between each crest. I finally made it out of the rip maybe a mile from shore and figured it was a good distance to keep from the beach as I headed for the southern end of the island. I hadn't gone too far when I was shocked to see a huge breaking wave coming at the side of my boat, I had rowed almost to the spoils bank from the dredging of the channel in the mouth. I turned into the wave and headed back offshore to get out beyond where it was breaking.

After rowing about halfway down the length of the island I found the dory hard to handle due to it being designed for two rowers and I was solo. I filled the water ballast jugs, and while in the middle of doing it got challenged by a motorboat operator who thought I was stealing from lobster pots. Sometime after noon I made it to the State Beach at the very southern end of Plum Island and pulled the boat out of the surf and ate my crackers for lunch. I waited until I saw that the tide was coming back in before starting out again.

I remember Plum Island Sound as a bunch of shell banks and mud that I kept running aground on and having to wait until I floated off to continue. I still can't believe I found the Plum Island River at the northern end of the Sound so easily, as years later I had such a hard time doing so in the Three Rivers Race from Ipswich to Salisbury and

## Rowing on the Treadmill

### Memories of My Time in the Rings Island Rowing Club

By Joshua Withe

ended up going up Old Town Creek along with the rest of the people in the race. I found it, though, and ended up at the Plum Island Turnpike bridge fighting the current to make it back into the Merrimack River. By now I was well past tired and still had a few miles to cover, as usual the current wasn't as powerful as the wind so I had to hug the Newburyport side of the river until I got up to the American Yacht Club and had to cross the channel to Rings Island.

I don't remember anything of the unloading of the dory, or the five-mile bike ride home, but I do remember after I got home I was too tired to climb the stairs in the house. BUT I do remember the phone call I got from Chris, he was worried since I hadn't left a float plan, hadn't told anyone what I was planning to do or where I was planning to go, and that I had left without an anchor in the boat. It was a few weeks until I got to go rowing by myself again.

### Racing at Mystic Seaport

Our Rings Island Rowing Club was invited to row against other youth rowing clubs at an event Ed McCabe from the Hull Lifesaving Museum rowing program was in charge of (I think). The first year we beat everyone in the dory racing, and the whaleboat races as well. The latter was a surprise as we rowed dories all the time but never got to row in a multi-oared boat. I remember when I was a kid my parents would take us to Mystic Seaport once a year. I took a really nice picture of a newly launched lapstrake dory soaking to swell up its seams with the steamboat *Sabino* in the background. Now I was racing one of those dories like the one in my picture.

The biggest deal for us was that our dories weren't much like the Mystic dories, ours were designed for the Coast Guard for shore rescue in World War II and, being plywood, were much lighter. The Mystic dories were totally traditional, they were heavy, narrower, and top heavy, if we didn't stay on top of our boat it tended to roll onto one beam and "spin out." The tholepins were the least of our trouble.

I had been rowing all winter as well as all summer. During the winter when it was dark I stayed right off the Rings Island pier and rowed against the "treadmill," the combination 9kt current and wind that made us excellent rowers. If the tide wasn't screaming I would do laps around the harbor, up to the Gillis bridge, across to Newburyport, down to the Coast Guard Base, and back across to Rings Island. That winter I found two large bowling balls and practiced racing around a few of the mooring balls left in the river. If I kept my turns smooth the bowling balls didn't cause my boat to "spin out," if I didn't they caused the dory to lean. So that year at Mystic I set the course record.

One bit of exciting action there for us was watching one of the boats from another club. Since they didn't have to steer when they rowed normally, they didn't look where they were going in the dory race. They had put two

of their strongest rowers in a dory to try to beat us. At the start they flew off the line but the further ahead they got the more off course they got. At first everyone was screaming, "Go, Go, Go," but then it changed to, "look out, LOOK OUT!" They hit a large sailboat broadside, rode up its side quite a ways, and then fell forward, All we could see were feet and oars sticking up out of the dory!

The next year they didn't have the dory races and Hull ended up beating us by a foot in the whaleboats. That was the year my sister had joined RIRC and she went out for a row in the whaleboats. If you ever row in one the first thing you will notice is the sweeps are huge, when they say "toss oars" (stand them straight up for docking), it is like trying to hold up a telephone pole. And when you are rowing you need to keep control of your sweep, if you can't get it out of the water you need to duck under it quick or it will stuff you into the sweep of the rower in front of you (you sit opposite your oarlock). I was impressed my little sister could do it and that she wasn't the one who got stuffed, it was someone else on her boat.

### Death Row

I was surprised when my sister got into rowing for a year or two, she had had a bad run-in with Pike since he forcefully denounced creationism in his science class in which she was a student. She didn't go if the weather was windy, cold, or anything but summer and warm, when I went for my usual loop around Carr's Island she would row until we got up to Sheep Island, stow her oars, and talk or read until I needed her again.

One Friday, Pike did his usual Friday row and my sister came along, Pike liked to go to the mouth of the river and since it was low tide and would soon be rising, we headed downriver. It was a windy day and we got to the Tooth Pick, a red pyramid that is left over from the old steamers that ran down from Haverhill. We then pulled up at the mouth of the river on the Salisbury side and walked out on the jetty (big fine if you do that now). While we were rowing around in the mouth we saw a couple of windsurfers sitting on the beach. I asked if they were alright and they said it was too windy for safe sailing. Since these guys were nuts I figured we needed to start heading back to home now!

My sister and I started rowing back but soon found we couldn't get anywhere into the wind. I ended up walking in the rising water pulling the dory while my sister rowed on one side to keep the dory headed the right way. I had to wrap the anchor line around me so that when I stepped in over my head I wouldn't lose hold of the boat. About halfway back I noticed that three of the strongest rowers we had in the club had taken one boat and were fighting their way up the middle of the channel where the tide would help them the most.

By now there were clouds overhead and it was dark and stormy. In the middle of all that the harbor tour boat came alongside them and wanted to give them a tow. The skipper also yelled at them and told them to put on their life jackets. Personally I would rather have been in the dory, it was handling the waves better than the boat and the tourists were looking seasick. At least two hours later we finally made it back to the boat ramp and I was dead tired and late for work. Pike took even longer to make it back as he also had to have someone from his boat get out and pull

to make it back. When we told Chris about it he said it sounded like a "Death Row."

### Sail Boston '92

Sail Boston '92 happened the summer I got out of high school. I had jury duty one day that week and training for a new job another so I missed a few days. We got to use the Hull rowing program's dock in the Charleston Navy Yard, on the next pier over from the *USS Constitution*. There were so many boats in Boston Harbor that wherever we rowed the Coast Guard and Auxiliary formed a ring around us with their boats to keep us from getting run over. Ed McCabe had two of our dories race right down the middle of the harbor. He was riding on the back of the front Coast Guard boat yelling to us with a bull horn.

As usual it was Dan Noyes and Kevin White against Joe Bashaw and myself, and we never wanted the other boat to win, we pulled flat out for what we thought was a one-mile race at which point Ed shouted, "one more mile to go!" We continued to pour it on until

he said we were done. I think Dan won, all I know is that I drained my water bottle as soon as we stopped rowing and the Coast Guard had to tow both of our boats back as we were exhausted. Ed said we were doing something like 8-9kts for the whole race, but the tide in the harbor was running out so we had a push.

On the same pier as us was a small Lithuanian ship, unfortunately the pier was under construction and didn't have any decking, so while they were tied up to it they couldn't leave the ship. We rowed over and talked to them, they gave us some booklets on their ship (my mom can read a little cyrillic) and then a couple asked for a ride over to another boat at the other side of the harbor. Dan and another guy rowed them over to the ship and, since it was late, ended up spending the night on the other ship in the crew's quarters. Their parents were worried but they had a great time.

After a few days of rowing and racing on the harbor there was a race over at Windmill Point at the Hull Boathouse. I drove down with everyone, we were going to sleep in the boathouse and have a campfire on the beach.

While we were eating dinner a small rowboat pulled up on the beach with a man and a woman on it. They wanted to know which island they were on and seemed surprised it was the northern end of Hull. They needed kerosene for the lantern they used on the schooner that her father captained and he was the first mate. I gave them a ride but we couldn't find any stores that had kerosene for sale.

On top of all this the woman needed "feminine products" as well and she found those but no bathroom, she finally used the bathroom in a bar, but we got chased out of the parking lot when someone in the bar said she was a pot dealer because she came in with a bag and didn't leave with it. I drove them back to their boat and they set off into the dark to find their schooner in a sea of anchor lights from hundreds of ships in Boston's outer harbor. I hope they made it.

A few years later I visited Georges Island and found out about the "lady in black" ghost and the fact that she left by small boat from Windmill Point, and that her ghost has been seen there by many, makes you wonder.

I must start by telling you that when I bought our old wooden yacht *Elf* there was a large mechanical object below the cockpit taking up space. Some friends expected to turn a key and it would come to life, but that was just a dream. Having adventure in my blood, I pushed *Elf* out of her slip, raised the sails, and sailed down the Sassafras River. As time went on I found myself sailing without the worries of an engine, and I think that I became a better sailor as a result. When I purchased *Elf* in 1971, she carried a Marconi yawl rig and had a bowsprit that hung out 10' beyond the bow. I carefully planned for the tide and winds when we left the dock. Admittedly, there were times when the breezes died and we drifted, but it became character building. Please keep in mind I was only 19 when I started this adventure. We managed to sail in and out of slips for the next 20 years, which would amaze some sailors, never touching the dock or other boats with our bowsprit. I must admit I do love the yawl rig when it came to docking in tight places.

In 1991 we started the restoration, thinking we would be back in the water in just a year or two. As time progressed, we realized that to do the proper job we needed to replace every piece of wood except the keelson. The project took 17 years, two weeks, and one day before we could sail her again. During that time we were donated a used Westerbeke #33 engine. As we had the chance, we had it reconditioned and eventually installed in *Elf*. Of course, it would have been nice to install a new engine, but we just did not have the money for such a luxury. Keep in mind that I never had an engine that made noises, so I was not too concerned.

During this past summer, we took *Elf* to the Wooden Boat Show in Mystic, Connecticut (see *MAIB*, October 2009, "*Elf* Makes Triumphant Return to New England"). Not having much experience with marine diesels, I did not realize how poorly the engine was running until after we arrived in Mystic. Following the Show, we made the decision to return home to the Chesapeake Bay. Once we had crew, we started the journey making ports along Long Island Sound. We visited Sag Harbor, Green Port, Branford Yacht Club, and Seawanaka Corinthian Yacht Club. We enjoyed meeting many wonderful

## Elf's New Westerbeke

By Rick Carrion

people and displaying *Elf*. Then we went out to Sandy Hook, New Jersey, and anchored, motoring out the next day.

The day started well, but soon deteriorated to winds in the 40kt range with 8'-10' waves. With Barnegat Inlet in sight, we turned back to Sandy Hook, a wise decision. After that 17-hour day we all needed a rest, so we stayed over a day before heading for Atlantic City again. This turned into another 17-hour day, but this time we made our destination. We stayed over in Atlantic City for a day to again rest before pushing toward Cape May, New Jersey.

We got up at 5am to catch the tide, but when I tried to start the engine it would not even sputter. We had an engine specialist come aboard to confirm that the engine needed a major overhaul. DAMN! Now the question was how to make it safely down the coast, up the Delaware Bay, through the C&D canal, and down the Chesapeake Bay to St Michaels. After considering possible options, we decided to use our inflatable dinghy with a 15hp outboard as a yawl boat, a slow way to go but that was our only realistic option.

After we were well rested and the weather looked favorable, we motor-sailed down the coast to Cape May. It was a long day but we made it in time to watch a beautiful sunset. The next day the crew informed me that they needed to depart for home for various appointments. With all of our setbacks causing unanticipated delays, I lost my crew! I was luckily able to find replacement crew, which arrived at sunset.

The next morning we awoke at 4am to catch the tide and get an early start. We headed back out into the Atlantic, rounded Cape May point, and headed up the Delaware Bay. After entering the bay the winds shifted and strengthened and, of course, not to our favor. We made it to the east entrance of the C&D Canal at Reedy Point just in time to watch another wonderful sunset. We were up at 4am again to get a favorable tide to navigate the canal, which proved to be the right move. We

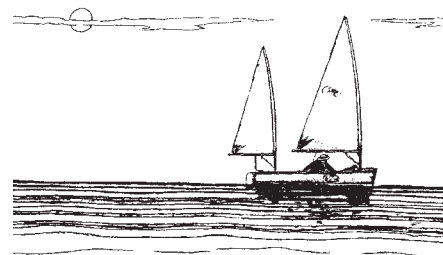
pulled into Georgetown on the Sassafras River at 1:30pm. We took a mooring for a month. At that point, *Elf* was only a ten-minute drive from home.

Now my real work was just starting; negotiating to get a new engine. I sent requests for the donation of the engine we needed and followed up with phone calls. No one was about to give an engine away for promotional goodwill. But Westerbeke Marine Diesel Co did offer a deeply discounted one at almost half market price. Therefore, I ordered a Westerbeke 44-B and waited. In the meantime, we moved *Elf* back to the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in St Michaels, Maryland, motor-sailing the slow way. We returned to our homeport and I started to make plans and arrangements to extract the old engine and install the new one. We took delivery of a shiny new, in-the-box engine in late October.

It did not take long to remove the old engine and start the installation of the shiny new one. Neal Carter worked with me and other volunteer members to properly install it. We had to fabricate motor mounting brackets and shift cable brackets along with several other items. I am very happy to report that we recently started it up and ALL is working well. It fires up at the touch of the start button. By the time you read this we will have sea tested it and made final adjustments.

I also want to say that I am very thankful to everyone who contributed to make the new engine a reality. It is truly HEART WARMING to me to have such generosity displayed in a time of real need.

(Readers interested in following the ongoing (now nearly 40 years) saga of *Elf* should go to [www.cyrq.org](http://www.cyrq.org), [elf888@earthlink.net](mailto:elf888@earthlink.net), or PO Box 237, Earleville, MD 21919.)



I've always wanted to explore the Atlantic barrier islands of Tidewater Virginia east of the Chesapeake Bay. There are 640 square miles of uninhabited sandy, moving islands between Chincoteague and Cape Charles, Virginia. This is not a national park, but private property owned by the Wildlife Conservatory. People can go there by boat and visit; they just cannot buy land there to live. I wanted to experience miles of sandy beach all to ourselves, and we certainly did just that.

My wife Judy and I drove to Wachapreague, Virginia, last September trailering our 16' flat bottomed skiff holding two kayaks. This small town, "The Flounder Capital of the World," is conveniently located in the center of a vast sea of marshes, shallow bays, and barrier islands protecting it from the Atlantic Ocean. We registered at the Wachapreague Motel which is just across the street from the free boat ramp with lots of trailer parking.

That afternoon we climbed into our kayaks to explore the marsh across the creek for just an hour. The tide was low in this area that has a difference of 5'. I am used to a tidal flow of 2' in Maryland. The marsh is a labyrinth of crisscrossing streams between towering reeds. We didn't have a map but had studied an aerial photograph in the motel office that showed everything interconnected and leading to two broad deep channels on either side. We were lost within ten minutes.

It was kind of frustrating knowing we were within 200 yards of Wachapreague where we could hear people talking and motor sounds, and yet every intersection was just 2"-3" of water over mud which grounded out our kayaks. We

## Marooned on Cedar Island

By Robert A. Musch



Our 16' flat bottom skiff with its 15hp motor is ideal for shallow water exploring.

wandered about for three hours before a lead opened up to an aid to navigation that led us back to the motel. Our host was not in the least surprised to hear we had gotten lost in the reeds, she had seen it many times before. I resolved to take and use my E-trex GPS navigator the next day when we would be traveling across the bay to the barrier islands we wished to see.

The next morning, after a hearty breakfast, we launched our skiff and headed across five miles of open bay toward the barrier islands. At each turn or critical point in our journey I was careful to mark a waypoint on my E-trex. I wanted to be sure to find my way back. Arriving at an island I noticed that the water was very shallow even though it was high tide. Several times the 15hp engine hit a sandy bottom and I lifted it up for a shallow water drive. I only needed 6" of water and also had back-up oars onboard. Reeds popping out of water indicated particularly shallow areas.

Eventually I found a channel leading up to a sandy beach and went ashore. Reasoning that we were on a high tide, I walked the boat several hundred feet into the channel and anchored it securely in case the tide dropped while we were walking around. There were miles of deserted beach in both directions with no one in sight. We walked for an hour beach combing shells and other interesting debris from the sand. When we returned to the boat we discovered to our horror that the boat was hard aground about 4' from the water's edge. It was too heavy for me to drag the boat to the water, but with the help of five burly Coast Guard men it could be floating.

My wife called the Coast Guard on our cell phone and described the situation. They explained they could not rescue us if we were on land, only if we were floating on water. As they talked I observed the water had receded about 30' in ten minutes. I knew we were stuck here until high tide at midnight. When asked for my location I said I thought we were on Paramour Island but I could give an exact GPS coordinate. A few minutes he came back on the telephone to say, "No, you are on Cedar Island. Do you have a medical emergency?" We said no, we thought we could wait 12 hours safely and rescue ourselves. The Coast Guardsman on duty said he would call back periodically and check on us unless we

declared a life endangering emergency.

Really, if you have to wait 12 hours someplace, the beach of an Atlantic barrier island is a pretty pleasant place to do it. We walked for hours over the sand and discovered many different sea creatures we had overlooked before. I went for a nude swim in the ocean which was a first for me. Every few hours Jeff Fox, the Coast Guardsman on duty, called us on the telephone to show his concern. He asked how we were dressed. T-shirts and Bermuda shorts. "You know it's going to get cold out there tonight?" It was 72 at the time and predicted to get down to 65. That is cool, but hardly life threatening.

"How old are you?"

"I'm 68 and my wife is 62."

"Are you sure you don't have a medical emergency?"

We didn't have navigation lights, a flashlight, flares, food, or water either, but I felt we could go a few more hours without them. The Coast Guard was concerned that we had no lights on the boat, but I hadn't seen a single boat all day and there would hardly be more traffic at night for a collision.

Darkness came by 9pm and we could see the tide rising. A few light rain showers passed through so we donned our personal flotation vests for warmth. Flashes of lightning could be seen over the ocean, but since we could hear no thunder I reasoned that the storms were 20 miles away. A Coast Guard patrol boat came out to the island about 1 1/2 miles south of us and turned on a blue flashing light. They called us on the cell phone and asked our position in reference to the blue light. We confirmed our position and they said the water was too thin for them to come to us. They were willing to wait for the tide to float our boat and then lead us safely back to Wachapreague, but I had confidence in my GPS waypoints.

It was fascinating seeing and hearing the tide creep across the sand advancing toward our boat. Once it was floating we pushed it to deeper water and started the engine. It was nearly midnight when I pointed the boat toward waypoint #5 and said we have 1.43 miles to go in this direction. There was no reason to go slow even though Judy was not happy going 20mph in total darkness. I would slow down as we approached each waypoint and program the next which brought us up to the boat ramp.

In the future I will pay much more attention to local tidal ranges and time when exploring unfamiliar waterways. It's a good idea to carry some form of lighting in the boat even though we intend to only be out in daylight. Little harm was done by this mistake and we now have this story to re-tell.

My tale is told!



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# Bad Decisions... Good Decisions

By Syd Chipman  
Reprinted from *The Shallow Water Sailor*

Lessons learned while sailing to Wye Island, Maryland, and back. I have a pet peeve about trip reports that I read in other boating publications; too many authors assume that their readers know where South Wachamakallet is, and then ramble on in great detail, leaving me wondering where in the world they were and why I should care. Yes, I could look it up on Mapquest, Google Earth, or whatever, but I wish they would save me the trouble. It reminds me of the teachers who told me to look up a new word in the dictionary when I wanted to know its meaning immediately to understand the lesson.

So I won't make that assumption. Wye Island is along the eastern shore of Chesapeake Bay just south of the Bay Bridge. The Bay Bridge connects the Washington DC and Annapolis areas with the other half of Maryland. Locating DC for you is beyond the scope of this report, however. A wildlife management area occupies a large portion of the island. Other SWSers have circumnavigated Wye Island in the past.

St Michaels, Maryland, home of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, is about nine miles south of Wye Island by water. The museum hosts the annual Mid-Atlantic Small Craft Festival, which occurred the first weekend in October this year. Actually, optional events extended the meet from Thursday through Sunday. In addition to providing an interesting venue and a variety of activities, they allow camping on the museum grounds. That not only helps to make the event more affordable, but promotes more interaction among the participants.

**Good Decision:** Isaac, my wife's retired service dog, and I joined the optional overnight gunkholing cruise to Wye Island. (I wish someone would give me the definition and derivation of "gunkholing" so I wouldn't have to look it up.)

**Bad Decision:** I arrived in St Michaels about two hours early Thursday morning, knowing that it would take a while to rig and launch *Cumulative Errors*. The ladies at the ticket office informed me that there is no ramp at the museum and that I should inquire at the administrative office. The ladies at the administrative office informed me that there is no ramp at the museum and that I should inquire at the boat shop. The gentlemen at the boat shop informed me that there is no ramp at the museum but that there is a public ramp about a half-mile away. However, there is no parking for boat trailers there. I should have arrived sooner.

Three hours later Isaac and I had rigged and launched the boat, tied it to a pier, driven the car and trailer to the museum, walked back to the ramp, and then motored our boat to the rendezvous, now an hour late. Pete Leshner, who is Curator at the museum, had seen the rest of the flotilla off at noon and then graciously returned in the safety powerboat, *Volunteer*, to find me. When Pete thought I was properly oriented, he left to catch up with the others again.

**Good Decision:** *Sportsman's Guide* was selling remanufactured Motorguide 54lb thrust, transom mount, digital pulse width



controlled, electric trolling motors for only \$199 (a \$499 value) a few months ago and I bought one. (Incidentally, I recommend [www.sportsmansguide.com](http://www.sportsmansguide.com) to everyone. They sell some real jewels at bargain prices among a lot of other stuff.)

The weather forecast for Thursday was for light and variable, but diminishing, winds. The westerly breeze propelled us north well enough for the first six miles. The trolling motor finished the trip for us when the wind died completely. At about 5pm Isaac and I were the last to arrive at the campsite on Dividing Creek. The wooden dock, sized for about four boats, now held a fleet of nine rafted up as best they could.

**Bad Decision:** The weather forecast for Friday, the day of our return, was 15-18mph winds from the south, the direction back to St Michaels. A small craft advisory was predicted for later in the day. Of course, I didn't know exactly what a 2' chop might mean for a small boat, but I had an idea. *Cumulative Errors* has about 10" freeboard when on the straight and level.  $24"-10"=14"$ , too much by my math. An inexperienced but smart sailor might have opted out of the trip on Thursday.

**Good Decision:** Isaac and I cooked and ate our supper aboard the boat and then took only essentials ashore for the night. We were tired after the trip from North Carolina and didn't want to feed mosquitoes anyway, so we hit the sack early. The rest of the group probably thought (correctly) that we were anti-social. We rolled up our tent and sleeping bag quickly when we awoke in the morning and were among the first boaters to depart. We had a hope of arriving back at the museum before the wind and seas made it dangerous. Brisk southerly wind sped us west along the Wye East River for about an hour while we ate some breakfast.

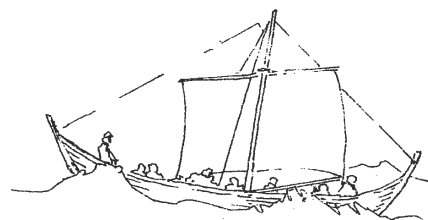
I'm sure that it would have better form to keep the mainsail up, but reefed, and diligently tack back and forth all the way home when we turned south onto the more open Miles River. Instead, I secured the sail and motored directly into the wind toward our next GPS waypoint at about 3mph. I didn't want to waste time while the wind and waves

were building. The wind was strong and the waves were the biggest that I had ever seen from aboard *Cumulative Errors*.

I pulled up the centerboard to reduce that parasitic drag. We turned a few degrees east about a mile from the museum harbor and had our destination in sight. However, the wind velocity increased noticeably and the wakes from huge cruisers added to the chop. I'm pleased to report that although occasional waves approached us at eye level, *Cumulative Errors* did not take on any water, even spray. However, we could not hold our course. Our ground speed became less than 2mph and we were losing steerage-way. Although only a half mile from the harbor, we were obviously drifting west toward shore and I couldn't think of anything else to do about it.

**Good Decision:** Having lost control, I dropped my 9lb Danforth anchor, let out plenty of scope, and hailed Pete in the safety boat on VHF Channel 16. Pete didn't reply, but I saw him turn toward us from about a quarter-mile away. I learned later that one of our fellow gunkholers had already seen that we were way off course in shallower water and had notified him by cell phone. Pete picked up our anchor and rode and then towed us to safety at the museum docks.

**Conclusion:** The high bow and mast up front certainly provides a grip for the wind and waves. Twenty-twenty hindsight suggests that lowering the centerboard again might have restored control by providing a fulcrum for the rudder to pivot the boat around. I'll try to remember that next time. What do you think?



Wow. Can it really be 50 years ago? This is sort of a sub-paragraph to a long story, a long story that I think worth telling in full. But just for a moment, let me tell the short one. And, thank you.

Somehow, last spring *Lady Bug* and I set out on the second half of a now 20,000-mile road and puddle trip. We left San Diego on our way to Arizona and later down the Rio Grande Valley to South Texas, followed by a meander up the right side of Texas, the middle of Oklahoma, the top of Kansas, parts of Colorado and Wyoming, much of Montana, a lot of Idaho, and a piece of Washington. By October *Lady Bug* was parked for the winter in her heated barn not far from where Washington and Idaho run into Canada. Good chance she won't see California again. There surely must be a story in that. But this particular yarn is limited to a couple hours in late autumn.

Diamond Lake is not more than 2½ miles long, including the knee-deep west end, at most only ¾-mile wide. But for me, this pond reaches all the way back to the very beginnings of my seafaring career. And *Lady Bug* and I went sailing on it one blustery, cold autumn day. We had made dozens of shallow beats, coming about every 100 yards or so, progressing alternately down both sides of the lake. We were nosing into each and every bight, cove, and moorage as we meandered our way to windward. Toward the place they still call "Boy Scout Bay."

I managed to mispend portions of my youth in, on, and about Boy Scout Bay from about age 11 to about 18, in magical summer visits that started as a shy Tenderfoot Scout and ended as a tanned and swaggering waterfront instructor lifeguard. And there I was sailing my little well-traveled pocket cruiser into the very bay on the very lake. I first got to know this spot that long ago summer when new Chevys had those silly curlicues on the rear end. Not really fins anymore, not really squared off yet either. 1958. Some would say, the summer before everything changed.

I rounded up into the wind, dropped the sails, and simply drifted off the beach where, once upon a time, I probably had more direct responsibility for life and limb than any time since. I couldn't believe it. The old camp was simply UNCHANGED. The docks were arranged the same. The waterfront building was right where I left it back before Kennedy went to Dallas. A lifetime ago. The old guard tower was right where I once conducted "buddy checks" from. *Lady Bug* drifted patiently while I had a very rare opportunity to "go back." Yeah.

That first summer at Camp Cowles, I weighed all of 63 pounds. To qualify in the camp rowboats I had to master the catch-pull-feather-recover rhythm every accomplished oarsman knows by heart. I had to row a straight course, backwater, twist, ship and stow in a seamanlike manner. I had to beach launch and rescue a "drowning" swimmer. Not a big order for a kid who simply loved everything about boats and being on, in, and under the water. Problem was, I also had to capsize, swamp, right, and empty the boat solo. These boats were two-position clinker built hulls of about 14' loa and easily 150lbs or more. That's almost three times more than I weighed that first summer.

Somehow I managed to get that huge tub swamped, rolled over, and righted. Some things one never forgets. Sort of like a first kiss. Once a kid has de-watered a boat with the blade of an oar, he walks just a bit taller. Nope. Some things one never forgets.

## Boats Really Don't Make Sense

### You Have to Put Your Hand in the Water

By Dan Rogers

So there I was in the same cove where (wasn't it only yesterday?) I had paddled, rowed, swam, waterskied, sailed, and generally lazed my way into adulthood. *Lady Bug* drifted and so did I. The empty beach was crowded with kids and young men. The deserted docks were crowded with boats and canoes and excitement. Yeah. I still enjoy my time on the water. I still look forward to getting a boat underway. But back when it was all new, things were just plain exciting. I'll bet you know what I'm talking about.

It's hard to imagine where those 50 years have gone. It really was a lifetime ago. A lifetime at sea, obsessed with and consumed by boats. All those "hours and hours of interminable boredom, punctuated by moments of sheer terror." All of those calms and storms and uneventful rhumb line transits. They all started right there on that beach and in that cove.

Some would say you can't ever go back. And maybe it's true, for them. But for me, I did get to go back. Just last fall. And did I tell you? Nothing had changed.

As I was saying, there is a bigger story about a bigger trip. Many of us think about taking a big trip with a boat. Some of us actually do it. Most of us like to hear about how other people managed to pull it off. I hope that includes you.

The story of this trip actually goes back over 30 years and I hope it's not over yet. The story starts on the dark and rainy night of January 13, 1978. Friday the 13th, in fact. That was the night I found myself unceremoniously fired from one of the best jobs I ever had. I turned in the keys to my company car, cleaned out my desk, and started walking in the rain. I wouldn't say that I was walking "home" in the rain because my soon-to-be-ex-wife wasn't going to welcome me there, particularly. It was a ten-mile slog in a suit and dress shoes to the only home I had at that moment, a Ranger 26 sailboat. There have been many "dark and stormy nights" in my nautical career since. But this one sticks with me as a sort of turning point, an extremely low one at that.

At that moment of being unemployed, unloved, and unhousted, I seized on a rather hairball idea. I was going to get my boat underway from her home waters in Seattle and sail to California. From there I figured to have her trucked overland to Texas and complete a sort of national circumnavigation. At that dispossessed moment in the Seattle rain it seemed like a year would be sufficient time to complete such a trip. Somewhere along that track, existing only in my mind's eye, there just HAD to be someplace, someone, and something for me. And what better way to find it than in my sailboat?

That's how this story starts out.

A couple or three years ago a friend on the docks in our marina in Chula Vista, California, gave me a dog eared copy of William Least Heat Moon's epic, *Blue Highways*. Seems Bill underwent a similar experience at almost the same time back in the late '70s. He found himself unemployed, homeless, and rootless. With a couple of hundred bucks, a couple of gas credit cards, and an old Ford van he set off to "find America." He circled the country eschewing interstate highways. He went where he could find "real people" in places untrammelled by WalMart and McDonalds. Reading that book brought a dormant, but not forgotten, dream of my own back to the front burner.

I still wanted to tour the country by boat. I also wanted to check out the back roads and the small towns. I harbored this secret fear that the rest of the world had become what coastal Southern California had become. The chorus from that frivolous calypso song says it pretty well, "They paved paradise, and put up a parking lot..." The escape trip I considered back in 1978 had been swallowed since by three decades of families, jobs, houses, and such. Certainly there were many boats and many voyages during that time. But the real "Route 66 by water" evolution had pretty much dropped off the radar. If Heat Moon could do it, why couldn't I?

I was just then somewhat recently retired from a long Navy career and less long civilian career. The kids were all gone their own ways. Kate and I were living aboard an old powerboat, our only dependent a small dog named Ginger. I had a keelboat and collection of smaller craft dotting the docks and floats around *Fiddler's Green*, our "house" boat. I got to go sailing in ice-free water every day of the year. Things were really about as good as a guy like me can hope for. I didn't need to go any place. I didn't need any more boats. I had it pretty much made in the shade, right there.

I'll bet everybody knows somebody like this. Some would even like to be somebody like this.

But the idea of picking up a lost string from 30 years before became rather intoxicating. And I'm absolutely certain that I'm not the only guy who has daydreamed about making such a dream-of-long-ago come at long last to reality. Like I said, we all know somebody like this.

Enter *Lady Bug*. My friend, Mac, and I were talking about this damn fool notion of mine to tow a small sailboat around the country. He said, "I have just the boat for you." In fact, he did. But he was no help when it came to explaining to Kate that even though we lived on a boat, and even though I already had just about every kind and size of boat at almost arm's reach, and even though we lived in just about the best possible place to live this way, I NEEDED another boat and trailer and tow car so I could go to places like Texas and New Mexico and Montana. Nope, I was completely on my own trying to explain that one. In fact, Kentucky and Tennessee, and North Carolina, and maybe even New England were on that list as well. It's probably true that most anybody living in any of those places would gladly trade with me for living on a boat in San Diego. But, doggone it. A dream's a dream.

So I bought Mac's boat, a cute, and essentially stock, Balboa 16. It took untold time, money, energy, and imagination to put the



Leaving home while the demolition crews tear down the old factory walls across the street.



Loaded but not really ready to leave.

road rig together. Certainly, I could have flown to my planned destinations, rented a boat, and stayed in hotels for a fraction of what putting this rolling show together cost. But what have practical considerations got to do with a man's dream? Right. Not a darn thing.

So now it's June 2008. I have the boat completely modified and messed with. I have the trailer modified and messed with. I can live in the van on the road and the boat on the water. I can live in the boat on the road, too. I've bought groceries and spare parts and camping gear and road maps. I've filled the tank with near-five dollar gas. The world awaits.

And, like a kid standing on a dock contemplating jumping into a cold lake, I suddenly wasn't so sure I really still wanted to go. Yeah. I'm pretty sure this is a bigger topic for those of us contemplating a dream trip than we care to admit. I'd imagined just about every part of my anticipated gypsy existence for so long that I began to wonder if it was really necessary to actually go. And, like the kid on the dock, the longer you wonder, the colder the water gets, the harder it is to jump off.

So I did what every red blooded adventurer does at a juncture like this. I threw all my gear into piles in the van and boat, drove 30 miles north, checked into an RV park, and took a nap. The nap lasted for a couple of days. I suddenly knew where to stow everything.

It's simply not possible to leave San Diego by road to the east or northeast without crossing mountains and deserts. And if one wants to head at all north it's simply not possible to escape metropolitan Los Angeles, and more mountains, and more deserts. I don't particularly enjoy Los Angeles traffic while towing a rather enormous red sailboat behind a rather large and heavy white van. And while mountains come with the territory, I hoped to put that off for at least a short time, too.

There is a sort of "short cut." It puts off the inevitable mountains and deserts for a while. But it limited me to a rather narrow corridor. The Los Angeles part is pretty much unavoidable.

My intention was to head north, sort of. I thought I would stay between the Pacific Ocean and the Continental Divide, most of the time. I thought I would like to visit my brother in eastern Washington, probably. I thought it would be fun to launch *Lady Bug* on San Francisco Bay, maybe. The lakes around San Luis Obispo looked interesting on the satellite maps, kind of. Shasta and Whiskeytown have reputations as windy places, sometimes.



Not really stowed in a roadworthy manner yet.



I'm no much of a camp cook, I mostly choose whatever is on top.

Sooner or later everything will find a place to ride.



Central Oregon lakes looked interesting in the road atlas, if the snow was melted. It would be fun to sail on Puget Sound again, if it wasn't rainy and cold. Not much of what most people would consider well-planned and organized, I suppose. That's the beauty and curse of voyaging solo.

And believe me, my background and training is pretty much like everyone else's:

(a) "be on time," (b) "be organized," (c) "be multi-tasked," and (d) "when all else fails, refer to (a) above." So, when suddenly presented with a legitimate opportunity to basically spend the summer going any place that suited my fancy, I was a bit lost. This is the biggest problem with getting to "do what you've always wanted." Getting started.

I readily admit to a sense of "how come?" at this point in the barely unfolded adventure. Towing a sailboat around the United States is one of the least cost-effective methods of travel. In fact, I'm still haunted by a very reasonable question posed once by a fellow who not only had never gone aboard a sailboat, neither he nor any of his extended family was likely ever to do so. He simply asked, "What do you do in that thing? Just sort of go around in circles?" The summary of his question was really, "If you don't use it to catch fish, and thereby feed your family, whatever do you USE a boat for?" And when I pondered that truly existential question, the whole venture began to appear profligate in the extreme. Truly, why ever would I spend all this time and money to tow a rather portly and overburdened little sailboat lashed to a rather portly and overburdened trailer behind a rather portly and overburdened Chevy van for thousands and thousands of miles across mostly arid landscape?

Without overly analyzing the "whys" of it, I do think it's useful to consider, yet again, what a boat is good for. I think there are three basic answers to this, with a fourth that sort of amalgamates the rest.

First, a boat is for designing, building, and perhaps modifying. I have met and known lots of people who find this a completely rational explanation. They don't actually have a compelling need to go anyplace, or even show their creation to any nonbelievers. Garages, back yards, and boat yards all across the land will bear me out.

Second, a boat is simply for HAVING. Sometimes as a dear and cherished possession. Sadly, more often, as just another toy. But that is quite satisfactory for many, many of us. "Come and see my boat" can be quite adequate. No compelling need to change the rigging. No overwhelming urge to sail to Tahiti. No tortured explanations of ballast-to-displacement ratios. Read the used boat ads. "Not in the water for past ten years. Was my father's pride and joy..."

Third, a boat is for sailing and boating. To this group, a few scratches on the topsides simply means they have been in and out of the slip. The leading line when these

boats are advertised is normally, “seats six people...” As one of my boyhood mentors offered, when I was worried about possible harm that might befall his boat while in my charge, “Dan, don’t worry about it, a boat is for having FUN.” Something to be used, like so much laundry detergent, I suppose.

Fourth, a boat is for companionship. She becomes a friend, a member of the family. She takes care of you when you are too tired, sick, or stupid to take care of yourself. She curtsies when you lay a flat coil in her spring line’s bitter end. She looks so sad when you walk away without patting her companionway slide. She keeps you awake nights worrying about the cancer invading a cockpit hatch, or a broken fastener protruding from the masthead crane. She certainly avoids the odd rock or passing vessel while you are below, away from the helm and not keeping a proper watch.

Suddenly, I didn’t know which, or how many, of those types I was attempting to combine into a rational explanation for this venture. The thing is, I’m not anywhere close to alone in asking these questions. So I did, again, what every red-blooded adventurer does when faced with uncertainty. I was outfitted, loaded, and for all practical purposes already departed. Time to shove off. I started up the truck and got back on the road.

Once upon a time, when “motoring” was more a leisure activity than a part of everyday life, folks would drive up the Coast Highway from beach city to beach city. Much of that old route still exists. It’s not a fast way to get anyplace. But I can just about wander the whole way from Mexico to Canada in this manner. And since I didn’t have any place special to be, and no schedule to keep in the getting there, the Coast Route seemed about as good as any.

First stop, Oceanside, California. I had spent my impromptu layover at the Marine Corps Rec area there on Pendleton. Oceanside Harbor is more or less next door. I drove down the hill, wound my way around all the tourist-related businesses cheek-by-jowl with the tiny harbor and pulled up at the launch ramp. Here I was. Three days on the road and still in San Diego County. I have sailed larger boats in and out of Oceanside on numerous transits up and down the southern California coast over the years. The notion of sailing *Lady Bug* around in that little puddle suddenly knuckled under to an irresistible urge to “get going.” So, no launch in Oceanside. Next wet spot, Dana Point. Whizzed right on by. Long Beach? Naw. Marina Del Rey? Been there, done that.

Almost before I knew it, Mugu Rock was in sight. Nothing was particularly unique here either. I was stationed at NAS Point Mugu and CBC Port Hueneme for eight years when I was in the Navy. During those years I sailed my 30-footer a total of 10,000 miles in and out of Channel Islands Harbor. But hey, *Lady Bug* hadn’t been there yet. Since this was supposed to be trailer-sailer trip, I resisted that ingrained habit so many of us who grew up in the ‘50s and ‘60s learned from our fathers, to drive as many miles in as few days as possible, and then return home by the same method. I pulled up at the Channel Islands Harbor launch ramp. In many ways it was like coming home.

It takes me about an hour to rig and launch *Lady Bug*. A bit longer, if I remember to do everything. This was still the summer before I replaced the stock rig and sails with the much taller and more complex Hobie 14 appurtenances. The shorter stick went up easier, the sails set simpler. But the rudder wasn’t quite so easy to manage and the truck and trailer hadn’t yet been visited by modifications based upon thousands of highway miles and dozens of launch ramps all over the western tier of the US (see January issue, “So Little Time... So Many Holes to Drill”). So maybe an hour is the “golden number” when it comes to getting that boat into the water. It takes about a third longer to put her away. You know, folding and coiling stuff ALWAYS takes longer than simply dumping it out and tossing it across the deck.

I can’t persuasively explain why but seeing little *Lady Bug* in the water there in Channel Islands Harbor just sort of thrilled me. The scene of so, so, many small boat miles and experiences for me. But the wind wasn’t blowing. “June Gloom” was in full fettle. We more or less drifted away from the launch ramp pier and off into the fog. The transit through the turning basin and out the entrance channel took a while. The Ventura County sea mist cloaked most of the scene. We ghosted past one of the two-ship Irving Johnson training vessel fleet, moored bow out at the police dock. *Lady Bug* actually fit under the dolphin striker as we came close aboard. I hailed the tall ship and received a rather startled reply from one of the hands out on the foc’sl. Dunno if he ever saw the little red and white cockleshell drifting under his bowsprit. I began replaying a scene in my imagination from one of the many Revolutionary War sea stories I’ve read. I was manning a small blockade runner, outwitting His Majesty’s Finest. *Lady Bug* played her part in the reverie and caught a catspaw to starboard and gurgled stealthily off into the fog.

Tide was at flood, wind still light, and the jetty rocks popped in and out of sight as we reached on out the entrance channel. No, I didn’t have a harbor chart with me. Not even a large-scale coastal chart, for that matter. I’m pretty sure the borrowed hand-held GPS was still in the box someplace in the van. This was supposed to be a trip to discover interesting inland lakes and backwaters. When packing and provisioning there was really no thought of ocean sailing. So, with the foghorn still repeating its cadence at the entrance, really no wind, and some rather huge rollers coming in from a storm someplace between California and Siberia, all that greeted me on this inaugural sail. I gybed over and began looking for the launch ramp. So it began. About 200 miles by road. About three hours of putting up and taking down. About 45 minutes of sailing and it was time to look for someplace else to explore.

The otherwise reasonable “Why am I doing this?” question was put on hold, more or less successfully, for the next thousand road miles. By then I was too far into the adventure to turn back. *Lady Bug*, *Big Ole*, and I were developing a rhythm. And, most important, we were beginning to “find America.”

(To Be Continued)



One of the prettier ways to leave California.

“You have to put your hand in the water.”



Ahhh. Mugu Rock and Los Angeles is behind us. The world awaits.



Back on the trailer and the fog clears over Channel Isles Harbor







*Nina* tied up ahead of the *Pinta*.

I ran into a sailing buddy, Don Greer, on Saturday at the local library. Don was using a PC to access his email, as he had recently shut down most of his household and was living aboard his Catalina up in the Michigan City (MC), Indiana marina, on Lake Michigan. Michigan City is about an hour-and-a-half drive north of our inland midwest town. Don, enjoying the freedom of early retirement, had come south to see his grown kids and do errands. Don had been getting used to living aboard his sailboat this summer in anticipation of trailering south to Florida for the winter and cruising. Don told me that reproductions Columbus' *Nina* and *Pinta* were in Michigan City through tomorrow, Sunday.

A few years previous the *Nina* alone had visited Michigan City and we had taken our then school-aged sons. The foundation that built and operated *Nina* had since added the second of Columbus' vessels ([www.thenina.com](http://www.thenina.com)). Tammy and I immediately made plans to spend Sunday afternoon visiting the ships.

Recreating Columbus' vessels was the dream of John Patrick Sarsfield. Sarsfield found shipbuilders in Valenca, Brazil, using design and construction techniques dating back to the 15th century. The *Nina* was built in 1988 and the *Pinta* in 2004. I was told by the volunteer crew that *Nina's* launch was built by a then 14-year-old apprentice when the ship was built. This is some seriously traditional ship and boat building. The construction is said to have used only adzes, axes, hand saws, and chisels. The result is very impressive, though the modern ships do have engines to keep schedules when the wind doesn't cooperate.

The *Nina* is 65' in length, 18' beam, displaces 80 tons, and has 1,919sf of sail plan. *Pinta* is 85' with 24' beam, 101 tons, and 4,000sf of sail. Both ships have four masts and a bowsprit. Each mast has but one sail,

## *Nina and Pinta*

By John C. Nystrom

and the bowsprit is used only for the forestay, with no sail or jib. The fore and main masts are rigged with square sails and the two aft (mizzen?) masts are lateen rigged. In the interests of safety and schedule keeping, both ships have modern engines hidden below out of sight.

The thing that caught my attention about crew arrangements is that only the Captains and 1st Mates are professionals, the rest of the crew are volunteers! I spent much of my visit talking to volunteer and professional crew members. I was able to talk at length with two of the volunteers between their responsibilities with other visitors that day.

Dick Oberweiser of Menasha, Wisconsin, is now retired but first saw the *Nina* in 1987. He said he always wanted to volunteer but the usual family responsibilities took precedent. Dick and his wife, however, had

been able to spend a week as volunteer crew and guides while the ships were in Waukegan, Illinois. Dick's wife went home after the week, but Dick got to spend two more weeks "running away to sea." Dick enthusiastically insisted he was, "having the time of my life!" Dick admitted to doing some boat building in the past and sails a Compac 16.

David Powell of Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, is also retired and is an experienced Chesapeake Bay sailor. Both Dick and David were very knowledgeable and more than a little enthusiastic about the *Nina* and *Pinta* experience. They managed to get me revved up about coming along next year! The foundation's website has an application form. Whether you are interested in these two historic ships, Columbus' voyages, want to tour the vessels, or volunteer to crew, the first stop is the website [www.thenina.com](http://www.thenina.com). I hope to coordinate a vacation in 2010 with the next trip to the Great Lakes. Hopefully, my next report is from the perspective of a volunteer crew member.

*Pinta's* deck as seen from the quarterdeck.



*Nina's* small boat, stored on main deck, built by a 14-year-old Brazilian apprentice boat builder.



Vince, who had been along for the crossing from Lauderdale to West End, had to leave next day to get back to his job in New York. Quite a few boats were waiting out the norther and the crews made up a varied and interesting lot. There was a wonderful Maine family off for wholesome adventures on their beautiful wooden schooner and I was their happy guest for a couple of great meals and some good talk. Contrastingly, there were some large very opulent power boats which almost reeked of drugs and sin.

Another more modest power boat housed an ingratiating fellow who managed to insinuate himself into almost every party and was almost certainly a narcotics agent. Ashore there was the grand hotel, which seemed to be solely occupied by young female American secretaries looking for romance in the tropics. The local population paid them about the amount of respect and consideration they deserved, and not a few were looking rather ill-used and unhappy by the time their vacations were over.

The ever-present wind whistled and sighed in the Casuarinas and I got lucky while skin diving off the marina, spearing the first spiny lobster which had been seen in those parts for many a month. Sadly the lobster and the conch, both staples of the local diet, were getting rare even back then.

The norther was blowing itself out by the time my wife's flight arrived from Boston. She took a cab from the airport, and knowing only that I was somewhere in the marina, told the driver to look for the "smallest boat in the harbor." When they finally arrived in front of my slip, the driver took one look down at the *Chamade*'s modest form and said, "Oh, lady, your man has IMAGINATION!"

Next morning found us out sailing along the withy-marked channel headed in the direction of Mangrove Cay. Then it was an easy sail out over the Little Bahama Bank in about 12' with an ever-changing panorama of marine life below, all suspended in crystalline water of an incredible turquoise hue.

Mile after mile we reached along in a world that seemed unbelievably clean and pure after the somewhat tarnished milieu of West End. The sun shone out of a cloudless sky, intense to the point where it stung slightly on our skin, like alcohol on a scrape. The wind was light and I tried out a very large overlapping drifter which I'd had made especially for this voyage. The drifter was a big success. With it we made four knots, where otherwise we would have made one or two.

Dusk found us off Mangrove Cay, a lonely clump of vegetation surrounded by shoals and offering, at best, a lee from whatever wind was blowing. But on this night not even that poor protection was necessary because the endless Bahamas wind for once had ceased altogether. Night fell and the stars wheeled overhead as the *Chamade* lay motionless in the breathless air. Completely alone in a vast watery world, we were about as isolated as anyone could ever be anywhere in the late 20th century.

Then it began, a chorus of wheezing, grunting, gasping, groaning, splashing pandemonium. Somewhere off in the not far distance something very strange was happening. It was as though a planeload of elderly sex tourists had descended to have an orgy with a flotilla of energetic mermaids. It was loud and continuous and, in that isolated setting, totally mysterious.

We were never able to figure out what was going on, or what the source of such

## West End Grand Bahama and Beyond

(1978 Style)

In a 21' Sloop – A Sequel

By W. R. Cheney

unearthly tumult could be. A pod of whales came to mind, but that seemed unlikely in waters which were never deeper than 15' for more than 20 miles in any direction. My wife was, understandably, alarmed and I think she may have harbored some new doubts about the joys of the cruising life, but as the night went on the weird sounds, while not diminishing, never drew closer. And by morning whatever it had been was over. If Kendra had any thoughts about leaving the expedition, she didn't say so. And the next few days were so pleasant that any incipient thoughts of mutiny must have blown away on sweet, fair winds.

Dolphins accompanied us most of the next day and the day after and their joyful athletics were a harmonious accompaniment to the rushing, rolling progress of the boat. The sun was warm, the air was soft, and beer brought up from the bilge seemed wonderfully cool and good. We spent a couple of days in Marsh Harbor provisioning and I took the opportunity to use the government offices there to "import" the *Chamade*, meaning that for a small fee I could keep her in the islands indefinitely without running afoul of Customs. Then we were off again headed south for Man o' War Cay and points in between.

On the way out of Marsh Harbor we crossed paths with a smallish freighter and had a classic encounter with her captain. As she came into hailing distance, the freighter's engine stopped and the captain came out on the bridge, leaned on the rail, and called down to us. "Where are you headed?" he wanted to know.

We told him Man O' War and the southern Abacos this year, and Eluthera, the Exumas, Long Island, and possibly Crooked and Aklins next. "You can have a lot of fun on a boat like that," he called down looking ruefully. I had the distinct impression that given half a chance, the captain would have traded boats and itineraries with us. But he might have wanted to take Kendra along as part of the deal, so I guess I would have had to turn him down.

"We are," we said, and waved. The freighter answered with a long blast and a toot from her mighty horn and we went on our separate ways.

The next couple of weeks were a blur of sunny, wind-washed days, blue skies, and always the limpid, crystalline turquoise water. There were fish and conch for the taking and on one isolated Cay I found a rare coconut palm which rendered a supply of fresh nuts, the milk of which made a wonderful cocktail when mixed with Mt Gay sugarcane rum.

There were moments when reminders of the darker side of existence poked to the surface, but they only acted as spice to emphasize how fine it all was. One time I was fishing out of the dinghy in a narrow tide ripped gut between two cays. I had been catching grunts, an unglamorous but tasty species, and had a string of them hanging over the side

to stay fresh, not realizing they would act as chum. Then I happened to look out over the transom and there, 5' off, was a shark almost twice as long as my boat.

It lay there just finning quietly and looking up at me and it was the vilest looking thing I have ever seen. That dead expressionless eye looked like the eye of the devil himself. The thing was looking at me and seeing dinner! I cut loose the anchor and my hard earned grunts, grabbed the oars, and was out of there. If dinghies can fly, that one did on that clear Bahama morning.

At Man O' War Cay we met Christy and Rob who were having some work done on their beautiful wooden pocket schooner, the *Saona*. Rob had just finished his internship and, newly married, they were taking a year off to cruise the Bahamas before he began his medical practice somewhere in Pennsylvania. We all became fast friends very quickly and *Chamade* and *Saona* made some very pleasant cruises in company.

Thus it was that we were racing along side by side on a breezy February afternoon when we found ourselves off Spanish Cay. Weather was coming and in our small sloop we thought it was time to look for shelter. Rob and Christy wanted to go a little further north so with fond goodbyes all around we parted company.

The charts showed a snug mangrove encircled harbor at the west end of the cay. For the rest, the place looked low and not particularly attractive. It appeared to be uninhabited and more than usually desolate. We poked our way into the harbor finding it well protected and totally deserted.

Coconut milk and rum in the cockpit was followed by fresh fried grunts and potatoes, a pleasant interlude which tended to soften the contours of our environment. Then, as dusk approached, we heard the sound of a motor. Looking out at our low mangrove lined horizon we were amazed to see a jeep skimming along the tops of the vegetation. It looked as though it was flying, but we assumed there was some kind of road just hidden by the low foliage. More amazing still was the fact that the jeep carried three khaki-clad men, two in the front and one perched in the rear carrying an assault rifle. Through the glasses I could see the banana clip in place and the hand over the trigger guard. Locked and loaded. What was this place?

Not that many years previously the James Bond saga Dr No had been popular and the idea of disappearances and strange goings on at remote tropical islands was still very much in the popular imagination. Then, too, drug smuggling was in its heyday in the Bahamas. A large cay in a more southern chain of the islands was known to be owned by a Columbian cartel. Tales of piracy, kidnapping, and murder were frequent topics of conversation everywhere.

Many cruisers felt that guns for defensive purposes were a necessary part of a boat's equipment. With only a Hawaiian sling and a fillet knife in our arsenal, we wondered what we had blundered into.

The jeep continued its patrol until dark, the assault rifle always on prominent display, but the gunmen didn't, probably couldn't, come any closer to us. We settled in for an uneasy night. Then it began to blow. We had been well-advised to seek shelter, assault rifles be damned. By midnight it was blowing 50 knots or more and we had dragged up against the mangroves. In a nightmarish fren-

zy of wind and rain, I managed to get a second anchor out and we were able to kedge off into deeper water where we rode uncomfortably until dawn.

With daylight the jeep and the artillery were back, but if they meant to scare us off, they were wasting their time. It was still blowing outside well in excess of 35 knots, and we were not about to venture forth in those conditions. Additionally, today was Super Bowl Sunday and I had every intention of listening to the game comfortably ensconced, beer in hand.

At around 10am a new noise rose above the howling of the wind. A high, powerful, penetrating whine blotted out all other sound, just a deafening roar which got louder and louder. We rushed to the companionway to peer out and could not believe our eyes... There crouched above the mangroves on this remote and apparently deserted cay was a commercial-size jetliner readying for take-off. The hidden road was not a road, it was an airstrip, and a major one at that. What was this place? Was Dr No launching his ultimate attack on America? It all seemed fantastic beyond belief. The jetliner took off in a cataclysm of sound and then the whining shrieking sound began again. ANOTHER multi-engined jetliner appeared, shook our small world to its foundations and took off headed west.

"Kendra," I said, "Dig out the cruising guide from the bag in the locker under your bunk. 'Let's see what they say about this place.'"

"Ah," said Kendra a little later. "Listen to this. Texas millionaire Clint Murchison, owner of Spanish Cay, entertains many dignitaries there and has made it known that uninvited guests are not welcome." You know what else he owns... the Dallas Cowboys."

Incredible, hidden somewhere on this unprepossessing lump of limestone and mangrove was a multimillionaire's retreat replete with jetport, tennis courts, swimming pools, and god knew what else.

"Well, that explains it," I said. Dallas is playing today. These people are flying from their private kingdom to watch their very own football team play in the Super Bowl. With any luck they'll be back on the island in time for drinks tonight."

I thought about how different men's lives can be. This was as clear an example of how "the other half lives" as any I had ever come across. To be at Spanish Cay was for us to be a world away from home. We were separated from everything we knew by weeks of voyaging and adventure. Sun, palm trees, dolphins and sharks, danger and delight. The Islands and the Gulf Stream were a vast, exciting world full of wonders.

For Mr Murchison with his gun-toting goons and jetliners all this was reduced to a tiny place. Everything was hours, if not minutes away. A few orders, minor inconvenience, and he was there. Dangers were minimized, and adventure was unlikely. What fun was that, I wondered, and no answer came.

The rest of our cruise for that year ended quietly. We sailed *Chamade* back to Man O' War where I made preparations to store her until next winter, and then we were on our way back to Vermont for another year of work in the real world.

The following year was all single handing. I made another two-day and night passage from the Abacos headed for Eluthera. Making a weary landfall off uninhabited Rose Island after that crossing, I managed

to fall off the boat and very nearly did not succeed in getting back on. Then it was the length of Eluthera and over to the Exumas. My first afternoon there I was chased off the beach by hungry-looking iguanas at Allen's Cay, an adventure about on a par with President Carter's encounter with the killer rabbit.

Down the lovely Exumas to Georgetown and then off to Long Island on the way to which I ran into a major and prolonged storm. Taking shelter in the lee of godforsaken Hog Cay, I anchored in 5' at low tide. During the entire horrendous week that followed the *Chamade* pounded unmercifully twice every 24 hours after the strong winds had blown a couple of feet of water right off the banks. While the wind shrieked and the boat pounded. I ran out of beer and books, definitely a low point in my sailing career.

We then went on to spend an anxious afternoon caught in sand bores on the way to Long Island. Here the bottom forms crater-like depressions ringed with sandbars. Once you are in among the sand bores you are trapped in a maze and exit is a daunting, seemingly uncertain outcome.

Two years later I gave up the *Chamade* for yard bills at Long Island's Stella Maris operation. My mainsail had disintegrated in the tropical sun and when I arrived the next year with a new one, it could not be used because the bolt rope along the luff was too narrow to stay in its slot in the mast. Without a sail, I was done.

In all, my time in the Bahamas was a wonderful adventure and it would be fun to tell more about it. But the logbooks are gone, and I can no longer dredge up the necessary detail.

When I bought the *Chamade* from a man in East Falmouth, Massachusetts, he said that if I didn't care to go out into Vineyard Sound, I would have the whole of Waquoit Bay to sail in. I think it's fair to say *Chamade* did a whole lot better than that. One year we cruised south as far as the Shinnecock Canal on Long Island, New York, and another year we went east as far as Soames Sound in Maine. Then there was Florida and the Bahamas.

I hope that whoever finally got their hands on her down there at the very southern end of the Bahamas loved her as much as I did.

(This is a sequel to "Fort Lauderdale to West End Grand Bahama" in the January issue. I think the contrast between days gone by and the present as described by Mr Depa in his *Jitterbug* series last fall is most interesting, particularly as it relates to our different experiences at Spanish Cay. It is no reflection on Mr Depa and his interesting account that I feel fortunate to have seen the Bahamas before so much has changed.)

## KITTERY POINT TENDER



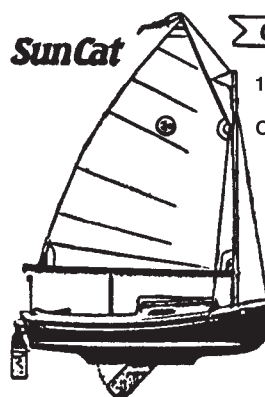
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## The International Scene

There were some signs that shipping was slowly returning towards normal. Many container ships seemed to be full of boxes (although many may have been empties), rates slowly climbed for both box ships and tankers, and China resumed much of its imports of iron ore and coal.

Some ship operating firms have healthy cash positions and are taking advantage of the bad economy. French shipowner Bourbon plans on having the largest and youngest fleet of off-shore support vessels by 2012. With a fleet of 366 at year's end, it will take delivery of another vessel every two weeks. And Taiwanese container shipping giant Evergreen Line, one of the few container lines that refrained from ordering new ships in recent years, plans to order 100 container ships in 2010 to expand its fleet to nearly 300 vessels.

Two major German container shipping lines withdrew their requests for government help because officials were simply asking too many questions. They will wait until it is clear whether the government intends to provide any help.

At 564,650dwt, the *Knock Nevis*, built in 1979 as the *Jahre Viking*, is the largest tanker ever built. It was recently sold and may be used to store crude oil until prices rise even further.

## Thin Place and Hard Knocks

Ships sank or nearly sank: Ships usually get some sort of inspection when in port and British inspectors at Portland found that the 4,200-dwt *Hanseatic Spirit* had 180 tonnes of water in compartments that held the fire-pump and emergency generator, plus nine other violations. The vessel did not immediately sail for its next port.

Ships collided and allided: The Chinese cargo ship *King Guang 7* collided with the Korean-flagged *Neo Blue* near Inchon and one Chinese crewman was missing after his ship sank.

In the Sea of Japan, the Korean-flagged fishing boat *Dae Kyong* collided with the ferry (or freighter, choose your news account) *Josho Maru* and seven died.

The *Santa Victoria* (or *Sankt-Viktoria*) collided with the anchored *Beryl* (or *Berili*) and the *Beryl* and its cargo of 2,850 tons of scrap metal sank but its crew was saved. This happened in the Sea of Azov.

Ships ran aground: At Maydon Wharf in Durban, the container ship *MSC Socotra* grounded out. No permanent damage.

The smallish container ship *São Gabriel* ended up parallel-parked against the island of São Miguel in the Azores and half the crew was removed. The other half stayed on board to take care of seven Lusitanian horses. The horses are an ancient Portuguese breed developed for military purposes and later used for dressage and bull-fighting. In older times they were a preferred breed for chariot-racing in Rome.

In Virginia, the old tanker *Monongahela* broke free of its moorings in the James River Reserve Fleet and grounded out about half a mile downstream on the James River. Dredging may be required to free the 700' ship and restore it to its place in the "Ghost Fleet."

Fire and explosion took a toll: On the Ho Chinh Minh River in Vietnam, the *Long Phu No. 1* carrying 700 tons of fuel burst into flames after hitting a barge. The fire was extinguished by the local fire brigade, but the ship later started leaking fuel.

Off Brazil, the Turkish tanker *Düden* set out distress calls after it caught fire. Twenty-two were rescued, some badly injured, but

# Beyond the Horizon

By Hugh Ware

one died. The vessel had been attacked by pirates off Nigeria only two months earlier and two crew were injured then.

Humans got hurt or died: Near New York City, a crewman on the coastal tug *Marlin* lost consciousness and was dead when the Coast Guard got him to a hospital.

In one of Turkey's 40-odd shipyards at Tuzla, a worker died from a fall while repairing a ship.

A Chinese crewman on the collier *Hai Xing* suffered a compound leg fracture when machinery fell on him 20 miles off the north Queensland coast of Australia.

Other events: The US Coast Guard used two cutters and a C-130 search plane to locate and stop a 32' sailboat about 140 miles southwest of Fort Myers Beach, Florida. They removed a three-year-old boy, reportedly kidnapped by his father.

At Mombasa, ballast problems or misuse of ballasting controls caused anxiety to onlookers as the tanker *Voge Trust* listed sharply to port and then righted and proceeded calmly to its berth. Unexplained was a plume of black smoke billowing from the stack while it was listing.

The following is both an example of a not-unusual salvage operation and the use of the latest technology to make repairs. Complicating both the tow and repair work were adverse weather conditions due to nearby typhoons. Here's what happened:

The bulk carrier *Minoan Euro*, fully laden with 62,730 tonnes of sub-bituminous coal (not a particularly large ship as bulkers go) is in the Makassar Straits of Borneo and has gone dead in the water due to tailshaft leakage. The 10,800bhp anchor-handling fire-fighting tug/supply boat *ITC Cyclone* comes to its assistance from a position about 400 nautical miles away, and towing towards Manila commences. Three days later, while the convoy is passing between Pearl Bank and Laparan Island, the tow begins to sheer very heavily due to strong tide rips and the tug loses control when one tow line parts. Due to the strong current the two vessels drift back through the channel between the islands at something like three knots.

Finally, it is possible to reconnect, this time to the stern of the casualty, and the tow moves towards the coast of Saban in order to reduce the influence of the current and to clear some coral shallows. Several days later, it even becomes feasible to reconnect to the bulker at the bow and the tow resumed to Manila. The salvage tug *Trabajador 1* is sent from Manila to assist as a steering tug and the reinforced convoy arrives safely at Manila. Working in a pressurized habitat clamped around the propeller shaft, divers replace the tailshaft seals in situ while the vessel was in laden condition. The permanent repair eliminates the need to tow the bulker to South Korea, its destination.

## Gray Fleets

The US Navy continued to relieve officers who fail to meet its high standards. Among the latest were:

The CO of the amphibious dock landing ship *USS McHenry* for fraternizing with a subordinate and his executive officer for failing to take appropriate actions after learning about the fraternization.

The Commanding Officer and Command Master Chief from the destroyer *USS James E. Williams* after nine members of the ship's crew were punished for fraternization. At least one crewmember is facing criminal charges for sexual assault and a second sexual assault charge is under investigation.

The commanding officer of the US Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, after he was accused of inappropriate management practices.

The commanding officer of Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain due to loss of confidence.

The commanding officer, SEAL Team 4 (he was not relieved due to any specific issue or incident, and there is no pending disciplinary action).

The commander of a Navy air squadron that provides the President and the Defense Secretary with the airborne ability to command the nation's nuclear weapons for loss of confidence in his ability to command (this is believed to be a personal matter not related to the squadron's missions or duties).

And finally the public affairs officer on the aircraft carrier *USS Carl Vinson* while the Navy investigates accusations that he heads two anti-Semitic groups.

As an interesting aside, what would today's Navy do about a certain young ensign named Chester W. Nimitz? He was a 22-year-old ensign in the Philippines in 1908 when he ran the destroyer *USS Decatur (DD-5)* aground on a mudbank. He then rescued a man who fell overboard when the ship grounded, was court-martialed and convicted of hazarding a Navy ship, and received a letter of reprimand. Decades later, of course, Fleet Admiral Nimitz commanded US Forces in the Pacific during World War II.

A British shipyard delivered the new nuclear-powered submarine *HMS Astute*, the first in 17 years, but the delivery was 47 months later than scheduled.

India realizes that it needs at least one aircraft carrier if it is to maintain a meaningful presence in the area from Africa to the Far East but its only carrier, the *INS Viraat*, just celebrated its 50th birthday and Russia's updating modifications to the *Admiral Gorshkov* drag on. Its delivery to India is expected in 2012 but don't hold your breath.

In France, naval officials may have breathed a sigh of relief. The Navy's only carrier, the *Charles de Gaulle*, was back in action after repairs lasting over a year.

Russia's impoverished Black Sea fleet lost the services of its last Kilo-class submarine. It limped home on partial power to join an even older Tango-class sub awaiting repairs. In fact, the entire Russian Navy is in bad shape, or so said a retired admiral. He said only a handful of major ships remained seaworthy and it might be necessary to mothball most ocean warships by 2015.

## White Fleets

During a nine-day Caribbean voyage, the cruise ship *Norwegian Dawn* lost power for nearly a day and its 2,400 passengers suffered from lack of electricity, water, elevator service, and air-conditioning. Because of the heat inside, many people slept on deck in their pajamas.

Off Florida, a passenger on the *Silver Shadow* went overboard and the ship located



him about four hours later. The rescue swimmer from a Coast Guard search helicopter helped him into the ship's rescue boat.

An Italian chef on the *Coral Princess* disappeared off Columbia's coast. He was last seen helping prepare the dinner meal. A life preserver was missing but its night flares had been torn off and left on the deck.

A 69-year-old man had a heart attack on the *Oosterdam* about 160 miles south of San Diego. A Coast Guard helicopter took him to a hospital in stable condition.

What responses are possible if a cruise ship holding 3,000-5,000 passengers were to sink in Antarctic waters? New Zealand hosted a discussion about the dangers posed to the environment by cruise ships in the Antarctic. How to prevent a major environmental accident way Down Under has been of increasing concern now that more and ever larger cruise ships are taking passengers south and many of these ships are not built to withstand contact with even ice floes.

Not helping the situation was news that the Russian icebreaker *Kapitan Khlebnikov* acting as a "cruise ship" and carrying over 100 tourists, scientists, and journalists, had been stuck in Antarctic ice for about a week before it was able to slowly work its way free. First reports had it that the ship had grounded.

#### Those That Go Back and Forth

The Indonesian ferry *Dumas Express* 10 sank off Sumatra in rough weather and 243 survived while another few dozen went missing.

In Egypt on the Nile, two ferries collided and at least 12 survived although more than 50 went missing.

In the Philippines at Manaue City, the Ormoc City-bound ferry *Wonderful Star* sideswiped the cargo vessel *Subic Bay 1*, and then ran aground. None of its 519 passengers were injured and most boarded another vessel bound for Ormoc. The rest accepted refunds.

The *Stena Europe* was traveling from Rosslare (it's in Ireland) to Fishguard (it's in Wales) when a woman was reported to have gone overboard. After a major search, her body was found two hours later.

Somewhere between Stockholm and Abo, the ro-ro/pax *Silja Europa* had steering problems and made tight circles for a while. Some of the 1,373 passengers were amused, no doubt. The big ferry was towed into Turku.

A log-carrying barge not authorized to carry people nevertheless had several hundred persons aboard for a trip across Lake Mai-Ndome in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It sank in bad weather and more than 70 died although 272 did survive.

In Bangladesh, several hundred (exact number unknown, of course) boarded the triple-decker *Coco-4* to return home for the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha. Upon arrival they crowded to one side for disembarkation although warned not to. The ferry flopped on its side and several dozen people died, most trapped underwater in the lower deck.

In British Columbia, the sizable *Northern Adventure* was caught by a vicious storm while crossing Hecate Strait and passengers, crew, vehicles, and the ferry itself got knocked about before it returned to Prince Rupert. Angry passengers demanded that the ferry company investigate why the captain had decided to sail. The ferry had been designed for calmer Mediterranean waters and was locally known as the "vomit comet."

A man jumped off the *Queen of Burnaby* in British Columbia. An employee saw him jump and deployed rescue boats. The man was back aboard in eight minutes.

In the far reaches of the Pacific, it is not unusual for islanders to travel from island group to island group. Four outrigger canoes carrying a total of 30 men set out from Chuuk (formerly Truk of World War II fame) in Micronesia but went missing. US Coast Guard and Air Force planes found three of the canoes and 24 mariners and continued looking for the fourth canoe.

Last February, two boys set out to paddle 150 miles to another island in an outrigger canoe. They were spotted and the Coast Guard dropped water, food, and survival gear and directed a ship to their location. The ship found one boy swimming and dropped a life ring but the sea was too rough and he disappeared. The canoe was spotted later but it was empty.)

The shortest ferry ride anywhere may be the 400', minute-and-a-half ride from one of the Toronto Islands to mainland Toronto.

#### Legal Matters

Nine seamen who blew the whistle on anti-anti-pollution events on the cargo ship *Theotokos* shared a \$540,000 award and the ship owners were fined \$2.7 million plus another \$100,000 to be used for community service. The master was fined \$4,000, got ten months in jail, and is barred from entering the US for three years. His conviction was the first ever under a law designed to stop marine invasive species from entering US waters.

#### Illegal Imports

A Spanish man jumped off the cross-Channel ferry *Barfleur* as it approached Poole Harbour in the UK. Found ashore wearing a wet suit under soaked clothing, he was arrested and held under suspicion of being an illegal immigrant.

#### Metal-Bashing

At Bermuda, the 350-passenger catamaran ferry *Warbaby Fox* fell from its cradle at the Royal Naval Dockyard drydock while being hauled out for service. Although dented and with various windows broken, the vessel was not repaired but went back in the water.

#### Nature

Some greenies have claimed that high-powered naval sonars damage whales and smaller cetaceans and even drive them to swim ashore, but a researcher, funded by the Navy, used a giant CT scanner, normally used to inspect solid-fuel space rocket motors, to examine the head of a sperm whale. He concluded that "whales cannot even hear naval sonar." Such sonars use the mid-frequencies while sperm whales use higher frequencies to hunt their prey. Next to be examined are dolphins.

After a 3½-year fight to clear the environmental way for deployment, trained Atlantic bottlenose dolphins and California sea lions will protect the US Navy's Trident submarine base in Washington State from nasty-minded swimmers. They will join other Navy aquatic mammals already protecting the sub base at King's Bay in Georgia as well as elsewhere. The greenies' major complaint was that Washington's waters were too cold for the Atlantic bottlenose dolphins. Navy tests showed they can handle it.

In a protest against nuclear power, six greenies boarded the Dutch heavy-lift vessel *Happy Ranger* between Denmark and

Germany and erected the usual banners. The ship's cargo was non-nuclear in nature, being steam turbines that will become part of a nuclear power reactor being built in Finland by the French company Areva.

Asian carp or silver carp were imported to clean up algae in Arkansas fishponds but some escaped and headed north. These carp are big fish and dozens, nay hundreds, may jump as high as 10' whenever a boat approaches. Some have severely injured boat operators and fishermen, and it is feared that if the carp get into the Great Lakes, the plankton-eaters will seriously harm the Lakes' \$7 billion fishing industry. To block the carp's northward movement the Corps of Engineers established an electric fence in the Chicago Ship and Sanitary Canal but others are demanding that the Canal be closed. But entrepreneurs are getting rid of the silver carp in a unique way, fishing trips for archers. Get an arrow into a soaring carp and reel it back into the boat. There, bash the fish until dead. Check out YouTube for numerous videos of jumping carp and arrow-hunting them.

#### Nasties and Territorial Imperatives

Denmark is planning to build a fleet of patrol ships or boats so East African coastguards can fight Somali pirates. The vessels would "block" the pirates and report their position.

The captain of the tanker *Theresa VIII* was shot while Somali pirates were attacking his ship and he later died of his wounds.

The pirates seized another supertanker, this time the *Maran Centaurus* with 2.2 million barrels of crude oil, vainly attacked the American-flagged *Maersk Alabama* again, and have been holding a 12-year-old Ukrainian girl for more than six months along with her mother, father, and the cargo ship *Ariana*. And piracy raged elsewhere.

#### Odd Bits

A Russian sailor fell through the railings of the tanker *Peterpaul* into the Persian Gulf one night but was rescued nearly six hours later by a naval helicopter on patrol.

Off the Hook of Holland the tug *Fairplay-21* took up its assigned lead-tug position in front of the container ship *Lars Maersk* but collided with it when the tug's engine failed. The tug was picked up by the bulbous bow of the ship and then slid to the ship's port bow. The *Fairplay-21* was able to free itself and thus was kept from capsizing but it sustained enough damage that it had to quit the job.

At Freemantle in Australia, the small Svitzer-owned tug *Biggada* was preparing to unberth the livestock carrier *Devon Express* when it capsized (or, more likely, was capsized by an off-center pull by the line up to the ship, an event also known as girting or girding). Both members of the tug's crew were rescued, one by a nearby dive team.

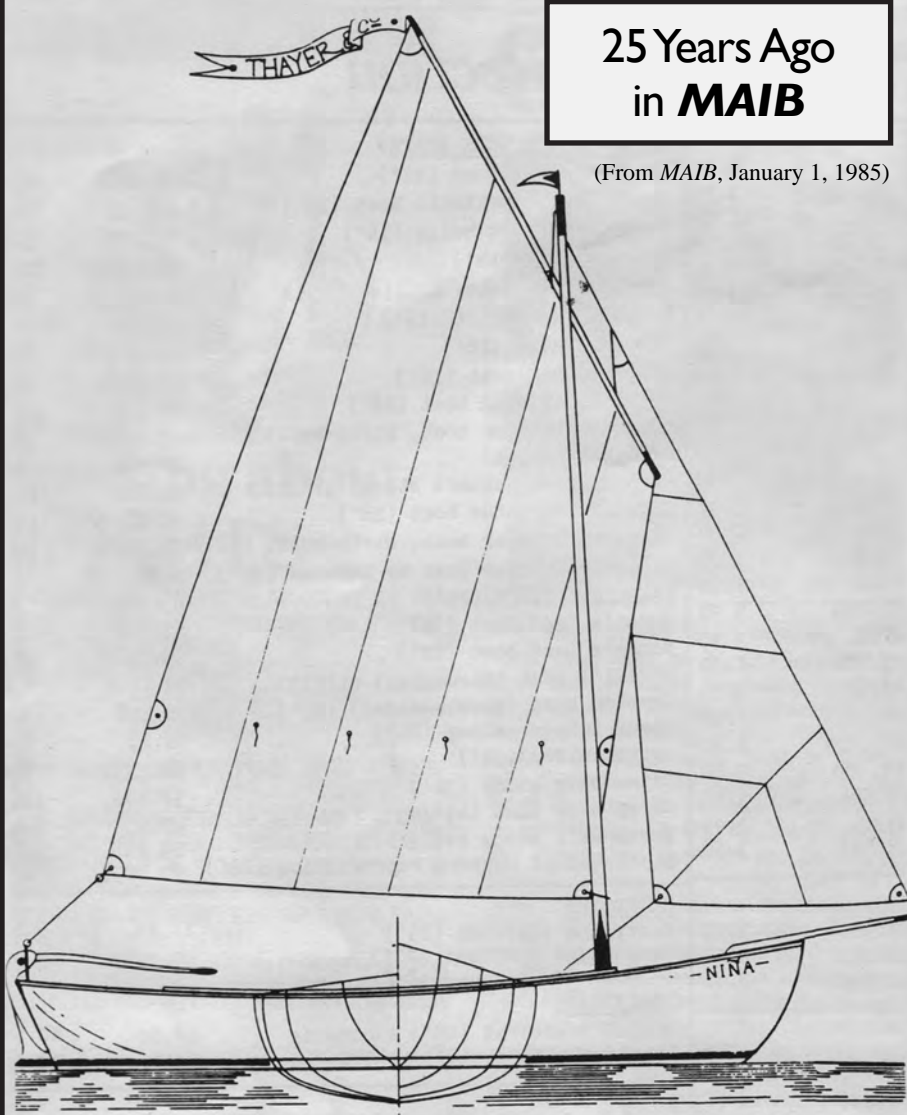
The Royal Navy decided that PlayStation Portables are the ideal device for allowing navy engineering types to study in confined spaces such as their bunks. The senior service bought 230 of the gaming devices for a trial and will load them with multiple but short study packages.

#### Head-Shakers

[Note that the following was derived from a Vietnamese news report]. It seems that the 11-man non-Vietnamese crew of the tugboat *Star Java* became so frightened when the hawser to its barge broke that ten of them jumped into the water! (All were rescued and rejoined the captain, who had stayed on the tug.)

## 25 Years Ago in **MAIB**

(From *MAIB*, January 1, 1985)



## NINA... an elegant beach cruiser

When Nina can't be sailed she can be rowed, Jim at the sweeps.



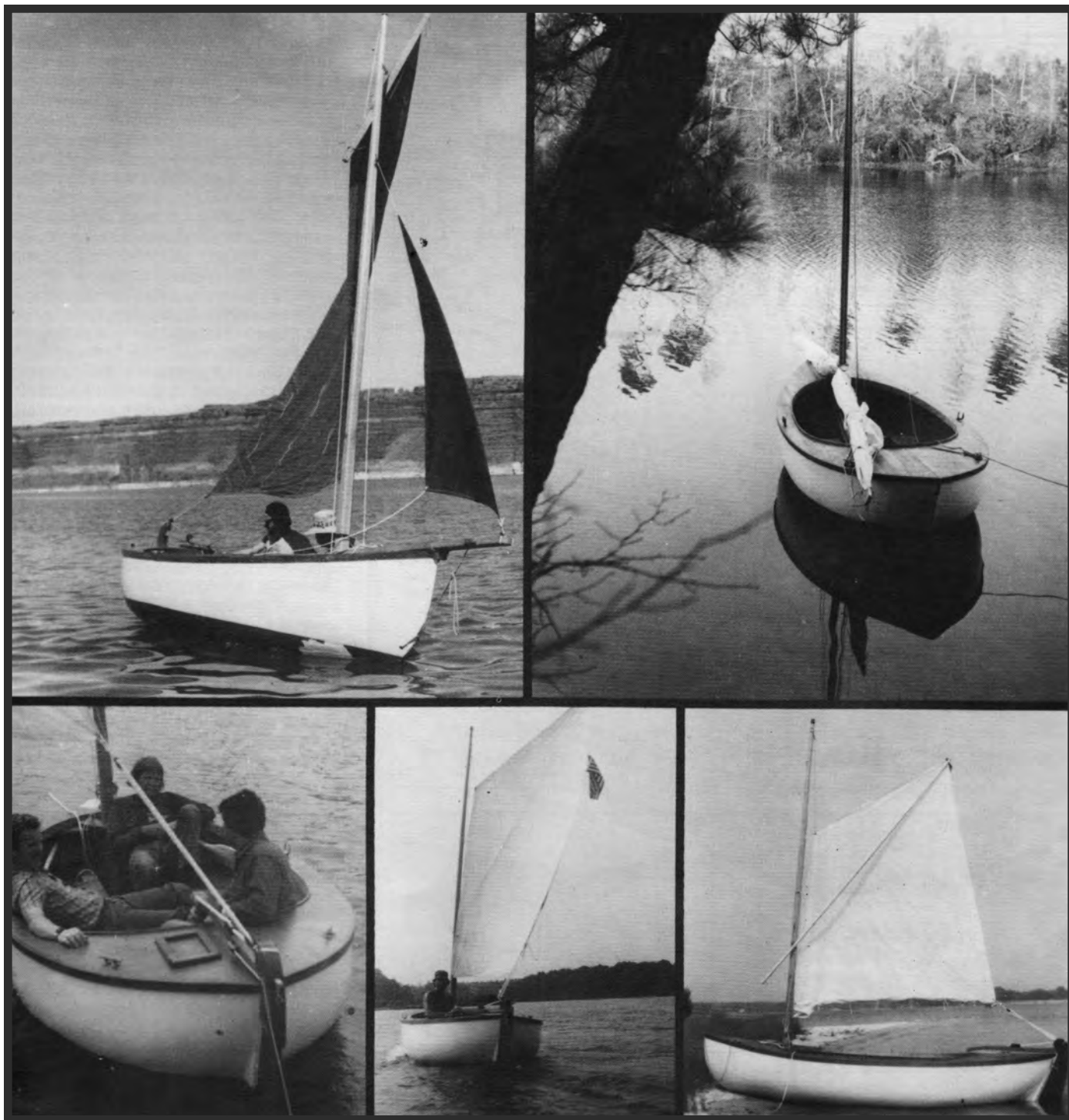
Several years ago after I had gotten into traditional small boats and joined the TSCA and begun to meet like-minded people, someone told me about a little mimeographed publication that came out now and again called *The Tholepin*. It was put out by a guy named Jim Thayer from Virginia, and Jim built traditional types of small boats, but in FIBERGLASS! Somehow, despite this aberration from purity, Jim had retained the interest and loyal enthusiasm of many who preferred their boats to be WOODEN! Jim would turn up now and again at traditional wooden boat gatherings with one of his fiberglass Whitehalls or "Lil Pickles" rowing boats and be welcomed.

The *Tholepin* was trying to do what I decided to do with this magazine, talk about the interesting things people were doing in small boats. Its biggest obstacle was that it came out now and again, mostly when Jim had the time in amongst building his boats to order. And it was a stapled-together collection of typewritten pages, pasted up willy-nilly, with few photos or illustrations. But I loved it, as did others who got to see it, because of what Jim was saying. In his rambling tales of boat meets, trips to deliver boats all over the country to customers, visits all along the way, he was telling us how much pleasure it was to enjoy such boats. His own pilgrimages sounded often like trial and travail for he travelled extensively ALL OVER THE COUNTRY in ancient old pick-ups and station wagons hauling trailers loaded with finished boats for his customers.

Thayer & Co is a family business. Jim builds boats mainly, *The Tholepin* also did serve each issue to bring readers the latest news of what he was offering. And the very latest has been Nina, a very salty-looking, traditionally-styled 18' beach cruiser. Jim introduced Nina at the Small Boat Show last spring in Newport. He was nowhere to be seen on opening day, Friday, but at his float were several of his Whitehalls and a Lil Pickle. (That NAME? It comes from the green color of the mold on which he builds it!) The people working the display were local owners of Jim's boats, his CUSTOMERS! They were filling in for the missing Jim. He was on the road between Virginia and Newport getting his ancient Volvo tow car repaired. He turned up Saturday morning rowing into the boat basin in Nina, almost completed.

"The boat I finished off for the Show is still out in Colorado," Jim explained, "so I had to rush this one to completion in a hurry in Virginia." Colorado? Yes, Jim has a seasonally migrating boat building business, winters he builds in tidal Virginia near the Chesapeake. Comes on summer humidity and he goes to the mountains in Colorado where the climate is highly conducive to good epoxy curing. Back and forth across most of the country, usually by rambling routes, too, delivering boats both ways to customers. So Jim's schedule is influenced by many factors. And so he was late.

But, Nina was worth waiting for. She is a plump craft, but pleasingly so. Jim's idea was a beach cruiser, a lot of room to ease back and mellow out while sailing the local shoreline comfortably in a boat that just has that old-timey look to it. The sprit rig with jib works well enough at this performance level, the double ended hull, though plenty beamy, moves easily through the water, the masthead banner adds a bit of flash, and under the spacious cockpit seating is lots and



Nina also can sport a standing lug rig (top left). At rest, a pretty craft if plump. Across the bottom: Plenty of sprawling room, making tracks, on the beach.

lots of room for food and drink. Especially iced beer in summer.

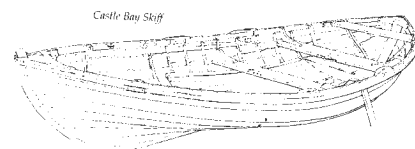
I enjoyed an hour on the water at Mystic in Nina in June with friends while Jim ran along the waterfront to photograph his creation in action. The breeze was mellow on Sunday but just right for the style of cruising this boat suggests.

Nina, at 18', falls into this area of camper/cruiser I've been exploring as interesting craft turn up. Four people can sprawl in total comfort day sailing and two can comfortably camp aboard overnight with a boom tent set (if you choose to fit a boom). Jim had a loose-footed sprit sail on at Mystic. Like his Livery Whitehalls and Lil Pickles, Nina can be or-

dered in any stage of finish, from bare hull on up, and as a do-it-yourself kit complete with all the bits and instructions for finishing.

Jim Thayer builds pretty much to order and he's a busy guy much of the time. The best way for you to find out more about his boats is to send him \$3 for a sample issue of *The Tholepin* ("An honest value, I assure you") and some photos, philosophy, cruising stories, and such information. Jim's address is 2106 Atlee Rd, Mechanicsville, VA 23111. Be warned, *The Tholepin* can be addictive. Ex-schoolteacher Thayer knows how to write that down home, funky stuff that'll grab you right into his world of messing about in boats.

**Editor Comments:** Jim is no longer in Virginia nor does he publish *The Tholepin* (he contributes frequently to our pages instead). He is now in Colorado as Grand Mesa Boatworks (see his ad in the Plans & Kits section). Jim still sails a Nina on his outings to the western high desert sailing country, Kokopelli is his major effort each year.



(Shanty: A roughly built, often ramshackle cabin; a shack. Probably from Canadian French *chantier*, hut in a lumber camp.)

We met for lunch at the Charcoal Inn in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. At the table were Wilbert "Jiggs" Janke, his friend Ron Bowen, and myself. Jiggs and I met 30 years ago on a job site when I was fairly new at carpentry and he was a union carpenter with much more experience. We started working one day when he mentioned to me that he "wasn't supposed to be here." Confused, I asked, "You're not supposed to be at the job site?" "No, no" he replied, "I'm not supposed to be here! Living!" By then I was even more confused and asked him to explain. He told me that during WWII his parents received a telegram informing them that he had been killed in action. "Really?" I had to ask. "Yeah, and as far as I know, they got it wrong! Ha!" We had a good laugh and that was the beginning of a great friendship.

After ordering steak sandwiches, the first question I asked was, "why a Shanty Boat?" With that, Jiggs and Ron began to fill me in. They had been traveling on the Trent-Severn Canal in Ontario in 2006, a trip of roughly 350 miles. Piloting a 12' Dynosw Zodiac with a 15hp Honda motor and wearing life jackets did not allow much extra room for their gear. Their solution was to tow a 7' inflatable filled with supplies. Every night they pulled into shore, set up their tent, cooked dinner, and camped out. Every morning they had to break camp after breakfast. During the last stretch on the canal, Jiggs announced to Ron, "This winter I'm going to build a boat." Surprised, Ron asked, "Why would you build a boat when there are so many out there?" And Jiggs, 84 years old, responded that he wanted "to build a Shanty Boat."

Back at lunch while the sandwiches and onion rings were being consumed, the boat requirements flowed across the table onto my notebook: No more tents, no need to hurry, easy to build, not expensive, live-ability, and come rain or shine they would be undercover and be able to "sit up and go their merry way." This would be compatible with their love of traveling long distances on rivers and canals and Jiggs (born in 1922) added, "people used to live on these things during the Depression, so why not?"

No stranger to backyard boat building, Jiggs told me about his first boat. He was 12 years old at the time and back then they had what were called tobacco boards, which was salvaged lumber from crating. He built his

## Why a Shanty Boat?

By Ric Puls  
rpwood@tds.net



Ron Bowen and Jiggs (right) taking a break, both veterans of different generations, good friends and travel buddies.

"boat" on the Pigeon River in Sheboygan County, Wisconsin. With lapped joints and nails saved and straightened from the crates, he formed and covered it with his mother's tablecloth made of oilcloth. "It was leaky as ever! So I tied it up under the bridge hoping it would swell up but high water took it away. I never saw it again. Well, so much for my first boat".

With the help of his niece K-lee, Jiggs began laying out lines on the attic floor of his barn in January 2007. He started with an 8' beam, which was the maximum hauling width before being oversized. The length of 22' was the longest boat he could get out of the shop. He envisioned a flat-bottomed johnboat with some curve in the bow so he didn't "plow through the water." The transom was reduced 7" overall from the mid section dimensions and after checking at local boat shops he chose a 12° rake on the transom to accommodate the motor mount. That, as Jiggs likes to say, was SOP (standard operating procedure).

I asked how he chose the curve of the bow. "Whatever looks good," responded Jiggs. He curved a batten and the first attempt was too severe. "The plywood wouldn't take it" so he backed off 4" and found that workable. The bow plate remains

4" wider than originally planned. Both sides got 10° of flair over a 29" rise from the bottom to the gunwale. Frames were 2' on center ("SOP"). Five identical frames coming from the stern gave him room for a 9' cabin. Jiggs is 5'4" and 150lbs so he made the doorway to the cabin a mere 5'5". What we call the Jiggsworthy scale. The center height of the cabin accommodates his "long-legged friends" at 5'10". The cabin footprint is 9' fore and aft and 7'3" abeam.

A hefty stem post graces the bow, providing a good anchor to the bow eye and a stout white ash pin to which he can tie off. The hull frames are made of pressure treated lumber covered with 3/8" southern yellow pine plywood. Longitudinal frames are 2"x1 1/8". Chines are 1 1/8" and the keelson is 3"x1 1/8". On top of the frames Jiggs made removable plywood floor panels. The gunwale is 1 1/2"x4 1/2" cedar built up from 3/4" strips. Economy and convenience regulated the materials used. He wanted to have a rusty corrugated tin roof for the Shanty Boat "look" but couldn't find any so he settled with 3/8" exterior fir plywood with battens and a good paint job. The hull was glassed with 6oz glass all around. The color scheme matches his barn, which came from Norm Abram's barn on "This Old House." The transom is also glassed 1/2" plywood over 1 1/8" treated deck lumber. His friend Klaus, a retired painter, grained and colored it to look like mahogany.

During the construction, everyone volunteered name suggestions for the boat, "all of which were ignored." There was too much to do as the summer was disappearing and Jiggs wanted to put it in the water and then take it on the Erie Canal. Choosing the name and painting it on the transom didn't help it float any better, so for two years after launching it went nameless and now, in honor of a strong German heritage, it's known as *Das Bot*.

Friends came to visit as word spread about the boat being built and Jiggs complained that the boat would have been in the water sooner if people would have helped more instead of just talking, but the work still progressed. The hull was built upside down, glassed and painted. Then one Saturday there was a "Flipp'n Party" where, with many hands, the hull was rolled out of the shop, flipped over (using the closest utility pole), and returned to the shop. Sheboygan Yacht Club Kayak Builders chipped in to get him a proper ship's wheel. Peggy Zelle, a local canvas maker, made him a monogrammed Cap-

Hull (glassed and painted) with volunteers wheeled out of the shop to be flipped over prior to the "Flipp'n Party."



Hull right side up with gunwale varnished, floorboards in, and cabin under construction.





tain's chair. I made him a pair of large port-holes and another friend, the Duke, made him six mahogany cleats.

M & H Outboard, a local boat shop, was contracted to install a used motor. Jiggs thought a 75-85hp would do the job but an 115hp Johnson was available so that is what was purchased with two 12gal gas tanks and the linkage necessary to bring the controls forward. A used trailer was purchased for \$200 and, after installing a new front axle with electric brakes, new tires, new electric lights and modifying the frame to accept the new boat, she was ready to haul. Jiggs added long bunks, or rub boards, covered with indoor/outdoor carpet and sprayed them with silicone. The total cost of the project was about \$9,000 with \$4,800 going for the motor, steering and fuel linkage and electric hook-ups.

Sea trials determined which prop to use and the result was a cruising speed of about 12-15mph and a top speed of 35mph;

all measured with a GPS. I asked Jiggs how he determined its seaworthiness when he designed the boat and he laughed as he told me "we built the boat and put it in the water." She draws between 5" and 6" loaded and gets about 3½ miles per gallon.

After a proper launch and an onboard party, Jiggs and Ron took off for New York with boat and trailer in tow. They put in at Tonawanda on the west end of the Erie Canal and traveled its length (about 355 miles) to Albany on the Hudson River. The members of Albany Yacht Club were very kind to them and while Jiggs remained in Albany, Ron caught a train back to Tonawanda to shuttle his truck and trailer back to the boat.

Our lunch was coming to an end and my notebook was filling up. I asked Jiggs how many boats he has built or owned. His list goes like this: He has built a 15' cabin cruiser, one Richardson boat, four kayaks, one johnboat, three stripper canoes and one shantyboat. He has owned over the years a

17' Chetek, a 19' Cruisers Inc, a 21'2" Skip Craft, and a 22'6" Cruisers Inc.

After lunch Jiggs and I went over to his barn to look over the lines in his attic. We were standing next to this winter's project ("crying to be restored"), an 18' canoe hanging in the rafters and in sad need of canvas. Jiggs said, "The shanty's not a fancy boat but it was fun to build and it got me on the water."

(For interested readers, here is a list of a few books to get a taste of early river and canal life. More books seem to be written about barges and riverboats [working boats] in the early years of our country and less about shanty boats, what we currently call live-aboards. Searches on the web will also yield some interesting results.

*The River Men*, Time Life Books series of The Old West, 1975.

*Floating West* by Russell Bourne, 1992.

*Canal Days in America* by Harry S. Drago, 1972

Shanty Boat complete and docked on the Sheboygan River in Wisconsin.



Jiggs and friend getting ready for a cruise.



I consider myself something of a student of human behavior, I even have an advanced degree called that. Granted, most undergraduate psych majors don't go on to complete a master's program in astrophysics. But academic credentials aside, there is a question that's been sort of bugging me. Maybe you have an answer. Maybe?

Here's the thing. Over the past several months I have been attempting to "preserve" a pile of my old photo albums and other miscellaneous boxes, envelopes, and odd containers of snapshots I have saved over the years. My chosen method has been to scan them on the top of my ink jet printer. Then, through myriad keystrokes and mouse clicks, they get magically schlocked into the computer's innards to someplace called, interestingly, "My Pictures." Pretty slick, actually.

The worst part is going through each picture scan in the same exact sequence. Anything less or different and things get pretty bollixed up. So, instead of analyzing and improvising methods to streamline the process, or increase the number of prints I can scan and store per hour, I've been pretty much left looking at pictures as they appear and reappear on the computer screen and, zombie-like, do what the computer demands. Lots and lots of pictures. Most of the ones I've been looking at this week go back 40 years or so. The older ones are in some other box or album. I'll get to 'em sooner or later. The question?

## Do You Know Anybody Like That?

By Dan Rogers

Yeah. The question. When "normal" people dig through piles and piles of snapshots they have taken over the course of most of their adult lives, do the preponderance have masts, and sails, and waves, and wet-cold-miserable people in yellow rain suits someplace in the frame? It's a limited sample. But as I sit and scan, it seems like the shots obviously taken of, and by, other members of my various immediate and extended family groups have couches and fire places and relaxed people seated at level dining room tables in the frame. Sometimes there are picnic tables and lawn furniture. But those other peoples' pictures rarely seem to include much exposure to rain or lurching or cramped quarters tilted at ridiculous angles. So I've begun to wonder about "normal."

Sometimes, in order to identify and catalog a picture of me or a friend/family member, I can tell the year, even the month occasionally, by the dinghy we are towing, the current location of the halyard winches, whether there is wheel steering or tiller, or perhaps if the cabin has been remodeled or re-modeled. Of

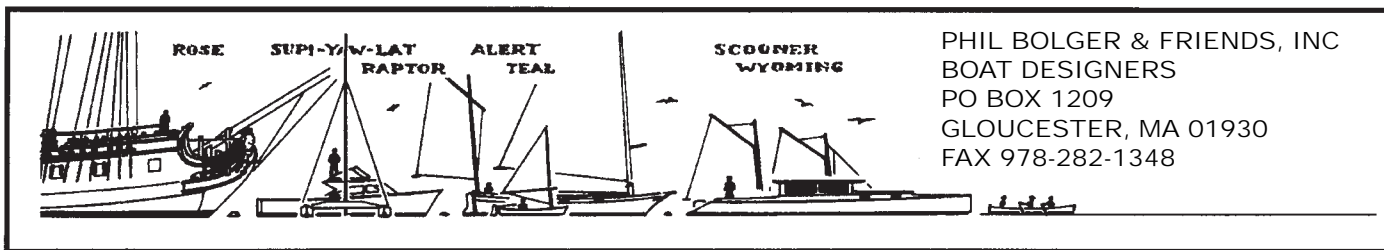
course, a summer voyage can often be dated by the headland, anchorage, or beach in the background. Time can be charted by which boat is supplying the cockpit seat, coach roof, foredeck, or pilot berth adjacent to the smiling visage(s) preserved on paper with silver nitrate and an old SLR Canon.

One of the essential notions for all students of human behavior is the concept of "normal." Without that statistically derived construct, all the rest of you would simply be crazy. But instead, through the guise of modern behavioral science, it would appear that just about everybody else is pretty damn normal. As I ask around and look at other peoples' lifetime accumulations of snapshots and portraits, for some reason the majority show backgrounds of sheetrock, tile, and non-bolted down furniture. I'm assuming now, that normal people take pictures of the places they spend much of their time. I'm also assuming normal people take pictures of people and places they choose to remember. And, also through the conventions of scientific enquiry, the majority owns the definition of "normal."

It's really a bigger, more existential, question. It's actually even bigger than that. It's a "boats are not really a matter of life or death; they are much, much more important than that" kind of thing. It's that sort of question. And, you are probably right. It's not exactly normal.

Do you know anybody like that?

*Messing About in Boats*, February 2010 – 41



PHIL BOLGER & FRIENDS, INC  
BOAT DESIGNERS  
PO BOX 1209  
GLOUCESTER, MA 01930  
FAX 978-282-1348

Dear Phil:

Here's a request from a cheapskate sailor who wants to do a bit of inland cruising in a powerboat. The initial goal is a boat designed for the Erie Canal, actually the New York State Barge Canal System that links Buffalo, Albany, Oswego, and the Finger Lakes.

You can do only 6mph on the canal, and even though the towns are numerous, most have pretty well turned their backs to the waterway that spawned them. You need a boat that's self-contained; with icebox, stove, and screened ports.

My initial thought was to get a big 24' aluminum john boat, put some plywood decking on it, and sort of pitch a tent. But subsequent conversations with the War Department showed me the error of that idea. So now I'm turning to you and *SBJ* for a simple, inexpensive canal cruiser.

Let's say this boat is to be for a family of four. We don't want luxury interiors, just a weathertight, no-tenting accommodation. The point is, this should be as small and light a boat as possible while still offering enough space for a galley, head, and four berths. It should also be as fuel efficient as it can be at 6mph, yet have the ability to hit 10-12mph in lakes or rivers where such speeds are legal. We will not cross big water, but rather want to poke around rivers, canals, and lake edges as cheaply and comfortably as possible while burning as little fuel as we can.

Michael Levy, East Aurora, NY

Dear Mr Levy:

In imagination, I've done quite a bit of narrow-water cruising since I was introduced to Arthur Ransom's Coot Club at age ten. But I've never done any, in fact, so feel free to correct this scheme if it conflicts with your experience.

I have a lot of sympathy for the "buy a john boat and pitch a tent" idea, especially since tents got so much better than they used to be. All the same, I think the high outline of modern tents, and not being able to stand on top of them, make a good case for the hard top.

At first, I tried an 8' wide hull with a rectangular deck plan and narrow waterways along the sides. This made a heavy hull and I was concerned that somebody could get trapped between the house and some obstruction on the bank, so I decided to show you the narrower hull with full-width house. The curved sides in plain view match up with the flare shown to produce the sheer from

## Bolger on Design

### Canal Boat

By Phil Bolger

From *Small Boat Journal*, January 1983

This low-sided Bolger sharpie hull is 23'6" long and somewhat reminiscent of a lightweight Martha Jane. The text has been slightly edited. I don't know if this Phil Bolger SBJ "cartoon" was ever built.

straight-edged panels. Most of the rocker is also built in as the sides are sprung around. I think it would be neat to get these sides out of two or three moderately heavy natural wood planks cleated together.

If they were 1" thick, or a little more, the plywood bottom and end decks could be nailed into the edge grain, thus eliminating chine logs and clamps to save some fitting and to eliminate some possible rot traps. The seam in the sides would be above the load waterline so there'd be no more chance of a leak than with plywood. The plank would be assembled flat from diagrams I would furnish, "instant-boat" fashion.

The bottom is supposed to be double plywood to finish 1" thick, with two or three layers of glass-cloth sheathing. I once bounced a boat this shape and construction off a rock ("I know the rocks hereabouts like the palm of my hand. See! There's one of them now.") It felt like being inside a bass drum, and the boat reeled with the shock, but it left no mark on her that I could find.

The house would be added after the hull had been planked upside down and righted. It would be all light (i.e., cheap) plywood and could be altered to the builder's taste after making a mock-up. I tried it much higher, but being able to see over it or to climb onto it from a low bank seemed more desirable than high headroom. There's about four feet in this cabin, not much hardship if you get a good stool for the galley.

The main drawback is that there's practically no stowage space under the transoms and none anywhere else if the windows are to be this big. People would have to live out of their seabags, which is a nuisance at times. Short of making the whole boat a couple of feet longer, any lockers would have to be stolen from the end decks. With your pleasant scenario in mind, I'm reluctant to do that.

Another way to handle it would be to build up the end decks higher, making storage space under them. She'd be better in rough water if this were done, but in the narrow waters I think the low decks would be more pleasant. In the same vein, I show no

bulwarks or toe rails, an added advantage of that is washing the decks by squeezing the dirt over the side. The strong bow staff, to grip or to hook an elbow around, is better than a pulpit, at least for smooth-water work.

I claim to have been the first to use bow pulpits on motorboats (about 1955), but they're often more in the way than helpful, and they're expensive. Perhaps there ought to be a rail or banister for the steps cut into the forward door, but I'd be tempted to try her without, if only to discourage people from coming down facing forward. At any rate, it's not far to fall.

The two-man punt shown is an amenity if not a necessity. It's good fun in a puddle with its sailing rig. This is one of Harold Payson's plan. Using the punt to support a shelter over the companionway produces one place to stand up and stretch on a rainy day.

I like the rudder and tiller you suggest, though she would steer and handle perfectly well with the motor and save that much money or work. However, hours of steering are not my idea of fun. With the rudder and tiller, and the high seat and foot bench shown, somebody can sit at her ease with the tiller resting on the bench and delicately controlled between the helmsman's feet. For sharp turns, the helmsman steps down off the bench and picks up the tiller with no combs or pins in the way. Barring the looks of all the garbage on the stern, I think this arrangement would be nice. The bench could be removable and the seat would fold up to clear the afterdeck. Its uprights would be handy to lean against on certain occasions.

I should say that the seat and bench are compatible with a centerline motor and extended tiller. Elimination of the skeg would let her turn more sharply, though she wouldn't track as well.

The windows are supposed to be loose panels of plastic which could be lifted out of their drained channels and stowed. The small ports in the galley and washroom could have tilt-glass Wiley-type windows to ventilate in the rain if you felt like taking the trouble to build them. The screens might be permanent on the outside, though maybe roll-up screens with Velcro attachment would be less vulnerable.

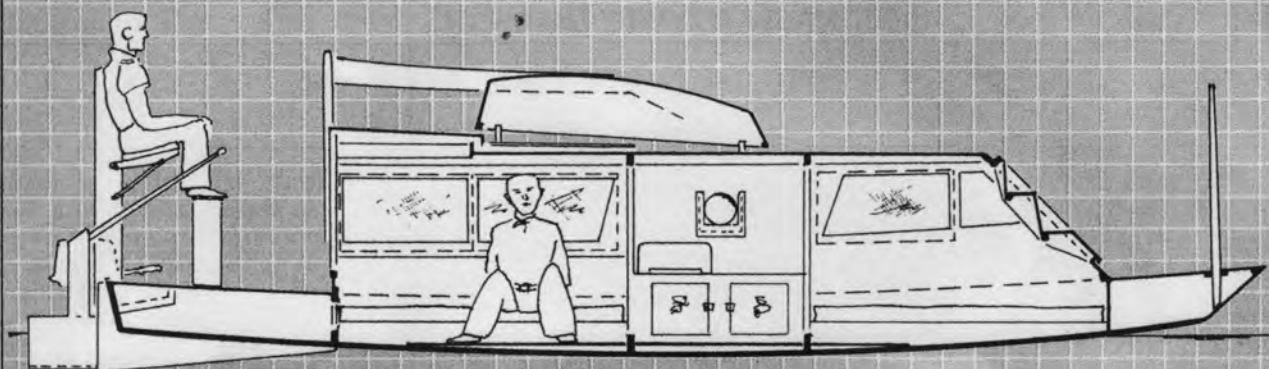
I've shown two wells as a second motor might make for peace of mind and give a short burst of speed across a big river or lake. One 7.5hp motor is plenty to cruise at 6mph, however. I thought of cutting a hatch in the afterdeck to stow the fuel, but I think it would be better to have all the tanks outside the watertight volume. The tank in use can be chocked off under the seat, with spares stowed under the punt on the roof.

I tried a character riverboat with lots of 19th century gingerbread. It didn't jell and I don't think it's workable without going to remote controls, which I'm told aren't available with the Honda motor. The fancy period piece would also be a lot more trouble to keep up as it aged.

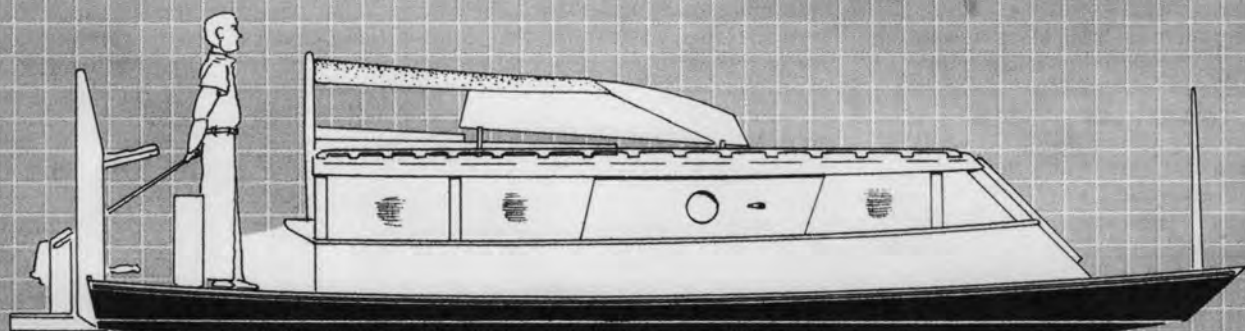
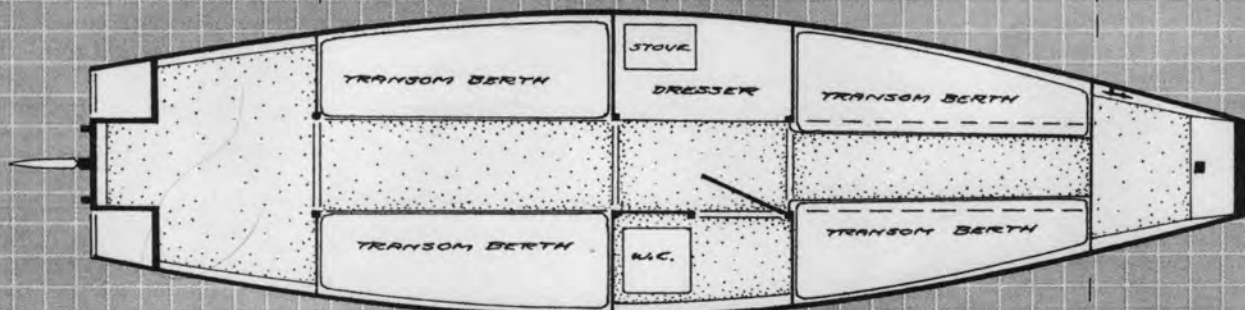
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# Proposed Canal Boat

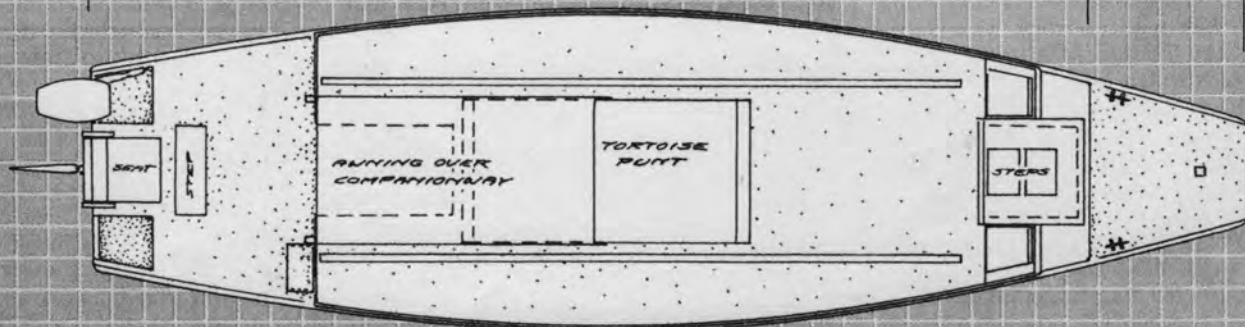


6'6" 4'0" 6'6"



5'0"

3'6"





# A Method of Getting Offsets From a Drawing

By Jay Koleszar  
j.koleszar@verizon.net

When my wife Jan and I decided to get back into boating, our requirements were pretty simple, or so I thought. We wanted a boat in which we could spend a day going somewhere and at the end of the day tie up and explore the town. Dinner would always be ashore. Afterwards we would sleep on the boat and, in the morning, get up and do it again. The boat would be trailerable to increase the area in which we could explore, slow speed so that driving would not be a full-time job, and comfortable without any unnecessary complexity. A survey of the existing boat market led us to the conclusion that nobody built a boat that would satisfy our requirements. That left us with the choice of giving up some of our requirements or building it ourselves. We elected to build it ourselves.

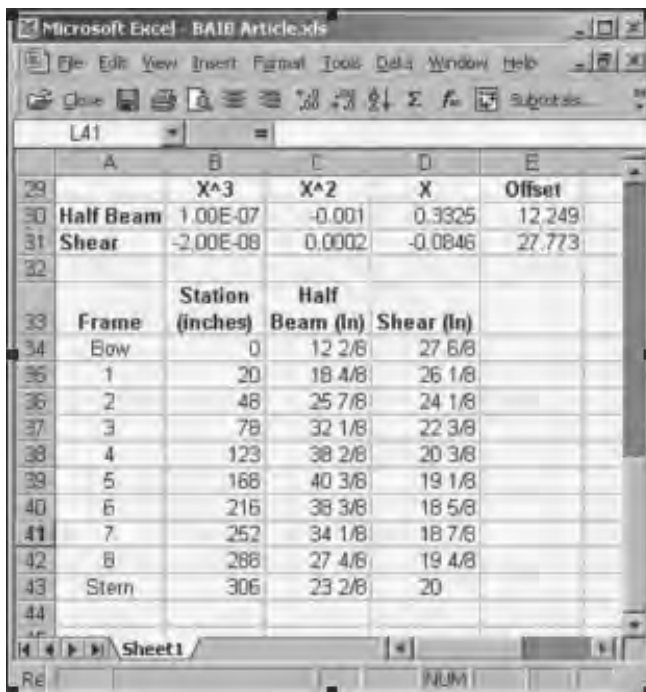
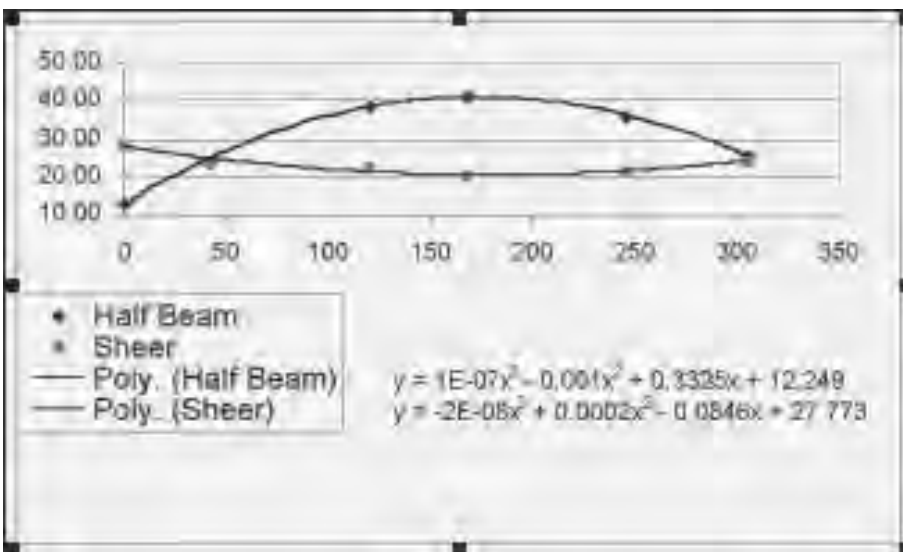
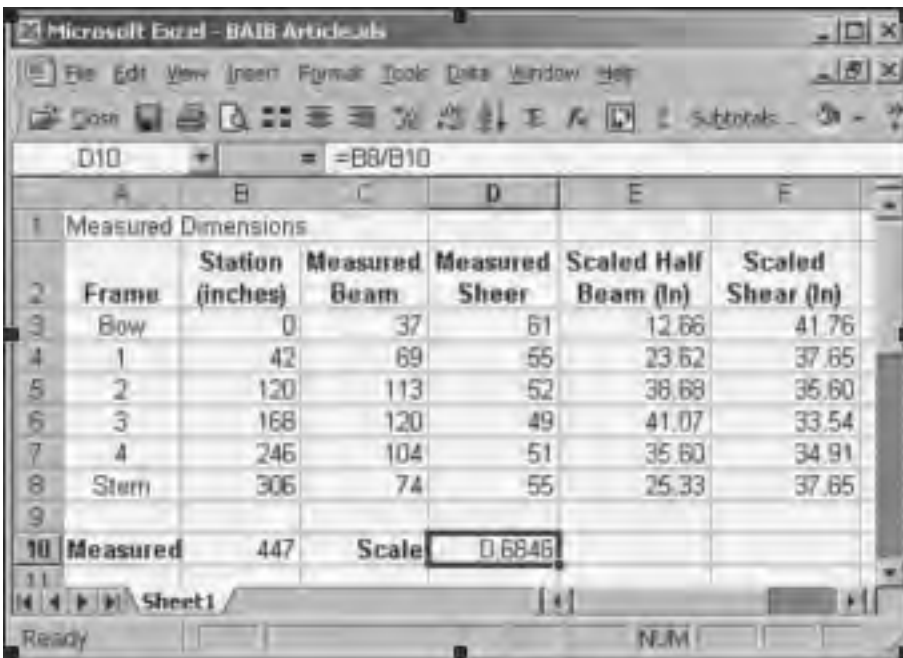
The closest design that fulfilled our requirements was a cartoon done by Phil Bolger in the January 1983 issue of *Small Boat Journal* (see accompanying article). It was the right size and with a simple hull that would be relatively easy to build. The cabin as drawn did not fit our needs. We only needed two berths instead of the four drawn, a Birdwatcher style walk-through cabin instead of a solid roof, and we needed more storage. We felt these changes could be made without affecting the integrity of the design. And so we began the project.

The cartoon of this Canal Boat did not include the offsets, but it did provide some key dimensions. The first step then, was to develop the offsets for the hull. I started with an enlarged copy from the magazine. With a good scale, I measured the beam at the bow, stern, and at each of the frames shown on the drawing. An engineering scale (inches are divided into decimal intervals rather than fractions) is better as the divisions are finer, and, therefore, the measurements will be more accurate. It does not matter which scale you choose as Microsoft Excel will convert the measurements to inches.

The same thing was done for the sheer, though here the measurements were from an arbitrary line below the drawing. I loaded the measurements into Excel. This spacing between the frames was given on the drawing. The total length of the boat is 25'6" or 306". I measured 447 so dividing this number into 306 gave me a factor of 0.6846. Multiplying this factor by each of my measurements converted these measurements into inches.

One problem with this method is that any error in measurement is going to be magnified as we scale up the boat. Another is that this is fine if the frames are going to be located only where the designer drew them. In our case, I was going to be relocating them. My solution for both of these problems was to find the mathematical equations for each of these curves. Before you give up on this article as being impossible for you to do, let me say that I use Excel to do the heavy lifting.

This can be done by creating a chart with the scaled points that we calculated earlier. Once the chart is created, a trend line is added for each of the curves. The trend line must be a





polynomial with an order of at least three. Going to the Options tab for the trend line allows you to select the option of displaying the equation on the chart. This equation is the best fit for your data, so any errors made in measurement will be smoothed out by the equations. In addition, with the equations, it is now possible to calculate the frame dimensions anywhere along the length of the boat.

Using these equations another table is set up in Excel. The factor for each of the powers of X is loaded into a cell (B30 to E31). The locations where I wanted to place frames was added to the Station column (Column B). In C34 I added the calculation for the Half Beam ( $=B\$30*B34^3 + \$C\$30*B34^2 + \$D\$30*B34 + \$E\$30$ ) and then did the same for the sheer in D34 ( $=B\$31*B34^3 + \$C\$31*B34^2 + \$D\$31*B34 + \$E\$31$ ).

All that remains is to copy these two cells down for all of the frames. Now we have the dimensions for each frame in the locations that

we chose and are assured that they will be on a smooth curve. If a frame has to be moved, then the new dimensions will be automatically recalculated. Notice that I formatted the calculations in eighths of an inch so that they would be easier to read on my tape measure. This is a formatting feature in Excel.

The next step for me was to do the same thing for the chine. On this boat the sides were made from two long boards with parallel sides. To get the chine dimensions, all I had to do was change the offsets by the appropriate amounts. The important thing to remember is that through Excel I can find the equation for any of the curves on a drawing. It is now easy to locate any intermediate point. Likewise if I want to scale a design up or down, I have a technique to do this. Say it is desired to build this boat 10% percent longer but only 5% wider. This would be done by increasing the station locations by 10% and the values of the half beam by 5%. The

chart will automatically re-plot the points and display the new trend line and its new equation. Change the factors in the second table and now the offsets for this modified design are complete.

I have also used this technique to calculate additional data about the design. By creating a station for each foot of length, it becomes easy to calculate the volume below the waterline to find the displacement, water plane area, pounds for inch displacement and hull area for weight calculations.

As a result of using this technique, my wife and I were not limited to the world of fully designed boats; but could now consider boats that were nothing more than concepts. Our requirements were unusual and as a result we had to look beyond the usual list of available designs. There are a lot of concepts that designers have considered and not found clients to build them. Perhaps one of these concepts could match your dreams. It did for us.

The helm sits high at the stern, giving good forward vision over the boat.



On display at the Phil Bolger Memorial gathering in Gloucester in September.

On Saint Patrick's Day 78 years ago my mother gave me life. About 12 years later my father gave me a small rowboat and some advice. And so began my life as an eager seaman. After all, I was born into a Navy family. Later, Sister Mary Angels, my respected homeroom teacher, knowing my Navy aspirations, called to my attention that priceless Biblical passage in Psalm 107: "They that go down to the sea in ships that do business in great waters, These see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep." But what about the wonders in the shallows? I propose to discuss some of them with you.

Boating for me is an escape from the usual day-to-day concerns and a chance to see small but fascinating things if I observe my surroundings in a careful and curious way. Rivers (and their tidal estuaries) have a life of their own. They tell a tranquil story, but they will talk to me only if I take the time to listen. This is where simplicity applies. Philosophical simplicity is an abstract concept, while practical simplicity is functional in nature. Some of my thumb rules for simplicity in small boats follow:

1. Learn the language and practice of seamen. Then boating will be more fun and I'll be safer in the bargain.

2. It's best if my boat is no larger than necessary to fill my basic needs. In boating (as in other things): smaller IS better.

3. My destination is not important. It's what I learn and enjoy that matters.

4. All rivers (and tidal estuaries) "deserve" to be "drifted." So turn off the engine whenever possible and look and listen while appreciating the peaceful nature of drifting.

5. Study the night heavens. Learn the names of the major stars and the constellations in which they reside and some of their mythological history. Learn to tell time by the position of the moon.

6. Boating (by its very nature) is an adventure and all real adventures have inherent risks. In order to fully appreciate the many rewards of boating, a prudent seaman will take appropriate steps to reduce these recognized risks to a minimum. I believe from my experience that safety and simplicity are somehow related. In any case a few basic safety rules will help. These are mine:

- a. Know my boat well and fit it out properly.

- b. Know my own limitations, both physical and intellectual.

- c. Whenever underway or working over the side, wear a good quality life jacket (PFD) properly fastened.

- d. Wear a plastic police whistle on a lanyard, either around my neck or fastened to the shoulder of my life jacket (PFD). At night, or in poor visibility, have a strobe light attached to my life jacket at the shoulder (ACR Electronics, Inc, "Fire Fly 2" is the best).

- e. Have a marine radio/telephone or a cell phone to call for assistance in an emergency (put cell phone in a "ziplock" plastic bag in poor weather).

- f. Have on board a small battery powered NOAA weather radio (WX-1, WX-2, and WX-3).

- g. Have a throwable life ring or horseshoe float rigged and ready on deck with a long length of bright colored polypropylene attached (as it floats). Also carry throwable PFD seat cushions (with shoulder straps) for each passenger/crew.

## Simplicity in Small Boats

By Tim O'Brien

- h. If I must wear boots, (I generally wear sneakers), be certain they are short boots and are very loose; ie, those that I can easily kick off when in the water.

- i. Carry a sharp seaman's knife attached to my belt by a lanyard.

- j. Finally, as a basic operational rule, always attempt to do things on a boat in the simplest proven way. Complexity generally comes back to bite at the worst time; ie, when there is little margin for a serious mistake or failure. Perhaps a few examples of applied simplicity would be useful:

When I first launched my little house boat *Shoobox* (1995) it didn't have an engine. So I built a special set of spruce oars. They were 11' long. The loom was a tapered 2"x4" with a 40" blade of 1"x5" spruce bolted at a 30° angle to the loom. They looked a bit odd but rowed quite well. I also had a standard 12' sweep I used as a steering oar and also as a push pole now and then.

Late in the fall of 1995 *Shoobox* and I drifted from Nashua, New Hampshire, to Amesbury, Massachusetts, on the Merrimac River, a distance of about 45 miles, with a few detours via flatbed wrecker to get us around several dams en route. It was truly a wonderful "shake-down" cruise lasting more than two weeks. I learned to slow down and to relax and watch the beautiful fall scenery and to appreciate many other fascinating aspects of Mother Nature. It dawned on me slowly just how big an advantage it was NOT to have an engine.

While drifting I worked out a daily routine that allowed time for cooking, thinking, writing, bird watching, and even a bit of napping (now and then). I devised a navigational warning system that worked quite well. I lowered an anchor to a reasonably safe depth (about 4') and in such a fashion was given timely warning of shoal water when hearing the anchor chain rattle in a large steel "fairlead" shackle bolted to a chine quarter post just below the waterline. Thus alerted, I could row clear of grounding. This allowed me to spend time below in the cabin with an occasional look around from the hatch.

One day I rigged some vertical poles as a temporary awning stanchions and went below to heat a pot of stew for lunch. Next thing I knew I was being challenged by an agitated belted kingfisher perched on top of one of the poles. His typical rattling chatter went on for some time. I moved to put a piece

of bread out on the cabin roof. Not in the least interested, my visitor departed flying off to a nearby tree in the usual pump and glide manner. Later on I fitted a short mast forward and permanent awning stanchions aft and have since had many flying visitors pay courtesy calls, fascinating, but only while drifting.

As I have said, simplicity is an abstract concept to many. However, if practical examples can be demonstrated, then simplicity will be accepted as a useful reality. Let us suppose that I wish to attach a line to the stern of a small boat such as a mooring line or the bitter end of a sheet. I could, of course, go to the local boat hardware store and find several pieces of metal hardware that would do the job and deplete my wallet with equal facility. Why not just drill a suitable hole high on the transom or stern planking? The hole should be a fairly tight fit for the diameter of the line. Then thread the line through the planking and finish its termination inside with a figure eight knot or if I want to be fancy, tie a wall and crown knot, or better still, throw a double Mathew Walker. I have applied simplicity, done the job in a seaman-like way, and saved myself some money as well.

To make you a believer, one more example: I buy an unfinished skiff and wish to fit it out for rowing. I can always go and buy a variety of metal oarlocks, but why not fit thole pins? They are much more useful, less noisy, and much cheaper and much more easily replaced in the field. In a pinch all I really need is a piece of broomstick or dowel or, for that matter, a straight section of tree branch from the woods and a sharp pocket knife. The space created by the frames between the inner gunwale and the planking and rub rail is filled with a tightly fitted block of wood about 10"-12" long and of 2"x4" thickness and stout enough to drill two (vertical) 3/4" holes about 3 1/2" apart to receive the two thole pins 9"-10" long. These thole pins should be a tight fit and carved carefully with a seating shoulder at the gunwale level.

Each oar will be fitted with a thole pin lanyard made of a suitable length of 1/2" nylon webbing or 1/4" braided line tied and seized into a continuous loop. This thole pin lanyard will be sized by twisting it into a figure eight to suit the combined girth of both oar loom and thole pin; ie, tight enough to retain the oar in place but not to bind the oar's freedom to move in rowing. Incidentally, thole pins have been used by competent seamen the world over for centuries. Why? Because they're cheap and they work! Simplicity wins again. So there you have it, the opportunity to apply simplicity and enhance your boating experience. In closing, may you always have "fair winds and a following sea."



On a Saturday last August a group of Norumbega Chapter Wooden Canoe Heritage Association members descended upon my shop to help apply the canvas to the 15' Chestnut Chum that I bought back from the WCHA Assembly in July. Jack Figgie came from the far western end of the state along with the O'Briens, Greg, Mark, and Jim. Bill Mueller came from Cambridge Hampshire. Jack made the long trip to see the Chum because he has a similar model Chestnut that he plans to restore this winter. Mark took some nice photos of the canvassing process and I have included some of them here.

With many hands and multiple sets of pliers and staplers we had the canvas on in quick time and settled in for sandwiches and drinks that Deborah had sent out for.

After the canvas was on it was treated with a preservative, left to dry overnight, and the filler was applied the next day. Since then the filler has cured, everything has been sanded, primed, and painted. New gunwales have been made and installed along with new seats, a new keel, and a new center thwart. The final touches were made on September 28 and the Chum was launched later on the

## My Chestnut Chum Project

By Steve Lapey



Launched and ready for another forty years of service.

same day.

There were no big surprises on this

project; the Chum was in pretty fair condition when it arrived. The most serious problems were those that it came out of the factory with back in 1964 when Chestnut was starting to cut costs and instituted the piece-work system that reduced their quality. The ribs were attached to the inwales with steel nails; they were all pulling out and had to be replaced with bronze ring nails. The factory workers must have had a problem getting the outwales to meet at the tips so they placed a pair of machine screws through the wales to bring them together. The only fix for that was to make new outwales. The screws fastening the outwales, the decks, and the keel were all steel and had to be replaced with brass screws and the steel carriage bolts for the seats and thwarts had to be replaced with brass. The shoe keel never looked right; it didn't fit properly against the bottom of the hull at the ends because it was too long and not tapered correctly. A new keel was cut to fit, it came out about 6" shorter and now it appears to be just right.

The next step in the Chum project will be a sail rig, there will be more to the story by spring.

Vern, Greg, Jim, Bill and Steve stretch the canvas with the help of the come-a-long and five cinder blocks.

Greg stretches the canvas while Vern drives in the staples. We used stainless steel staples with the Arrow T-50 stapler.



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Fog, for the adequately crewed sailboat, can spell trouble; for the singlehander, if he is not prepared, it can be a disaster. As a singlehander of a 23' sloop I can vouch for the latter. Caught in a sudden advection fog just inside the Race on Long Island Sound in June headed for Groton Long Point, Connecticut, I didn't have time to get a reliable fix before being socked in. The steady Force 4 south-westerly wind had me fooled. Little did I think a blanketing fog with visibility down to less than 50 yards would occur under such windy conditions.

I had just seen the Fishers Island to New London ferry pull out of Silver Eel Pond so I had a general idea of where I was. I confirmed this approximate position with my depth sounder and the chart I had on the seat with me, and using a set of parallel rulers I quickly set a course for the entrance to Groton Long Point Lagoon, only four miles away. I faced three basic unknowns in getting safely to my destination; boat speed (I had no patent log), current set (the tide was on the ebb with an easterly set but was due to turn in the next hour), and an indefinite starting fix.

I set an original course of 020 degrees N and started off on a broad reach, the wind off the port quarter. I wanted to avoid being pushed onto the rocks off Fishers Island's North Hill but hoped, by setting a course to pass close enough that I could hear the bell buoy off South Dumpling Island, to thereby get a definite fix. As time went on and the boat sailed merrily through the swirling fog I, unfortunately, became thoroughly disoriented. With no one to talk to for his or her reaction to the conditions, I found myself thinking I was heading too far upwind or west, so automatically I started angling for a higher course, steering 030 degrees, 040 degrees N quite frequently. The apparent reason for this, I discovered later, was watching the

## Singlehanding in a Fog

By Lionel Taylor

windvane at the truck of the mast too closely. I had not realized that the wind had slowly changed direction from southwest to west and I was trying to continue to sail a broad reach, as I'd started, forcing my boat further and further to the east.

Suddenly a substantial increase in lobster pot buoys brought me to my senses. There are, unfortunately, "fields" of lobster pots off the western side of Fishers Island, but the buoys were of a different color and more generally strung out. I turned on my depth sounder and found the water shoaling from the 40' I'd been running to 20'-25'. I must have been in under the approaches to North Hill, an area not only full of rocks but also a lee shore! I quickly hardened up and took a northwesterly course to get me back into Long Island Sound again. Happily, the soundings began to increase to the former 40' depth.

When I thought I was clear of the point at North Hill and out in deeper water, I changed course to due north hoping I had allowed enough for the now weakening easterly set. Since visibility was down to less than 25 yards and I was pretty sure I was in the channel between North and South Dumpling Islands, I started sounding the fog signal for a sailing vessel under way to alert the fishing vessels sailing out of Mystic and Noank to the Race area. My estimated position was confirmed by the depth sounder indicating 60'-70' of water.

I still had not heard the bell buoy off North Hill on Fishers Island, nor ten minutes later the horn on North Dumpling Island. Fog can do funny things to sound but this discrepancy gave me another serious concern. I also didn't want to pile up on the rip-rap of Sunflower Reef just west of me, which I might do

if I sailed too high a course. Theoretically, I should have passed between Sunflower Reef and North Dumpling Island if my calculations were correct for the entrance to Groton Long Point Lagoon where I moor my boat. But not hearing the horn on North Dumpling made me think I was nearer Sunflower Reef (radar beacon only) than I'd planned.

The wind had now definitely picked up to a Force 5 and the fog swirled madly around me. I lowered the jib from the cockpit using my trusty downhaul and returned to my seat at the tiller to watch my compass. This action returned the boat to a more upright position, lowering boat speed and enabling me to have better control so I could hopefully spot the rocks of Sunflower Reef if my depth sounder didn't give me adequate warning. While I was forward I got my Danforth anchor and rode out of the cabin and placed them beside me on the sole in case more immediate action was required.

Whether I passed to the east or west of Sunflower Reef I never knew, for approximately 15 to 20 minutes later Red Nun #24 appeared in the fog off my port bow. This buoy marks the tip of Groton Long Point and is approximately 600 yards from the entrance I sought. The easterly ebb was still flowing and had set me farther down Fishers Island Sound than I'd originally anticipated. Nevertheless, I was one happy fella to find out where I was, especially after realizing if I had sailed another 200 yards to the east I would have come a cropper on the rocks off South Beach.

I hardened up and set a westerly course under power for the entrance to the Lagoon. My final leg was not without a thrill, however. I again didn't sail high enough and soon saw the depth of water drop to 10' and the swim buoys off Main Beach appear. Giving my outboard full power, I pulled away from the dangerous rocks encircling the beach and was soon gliding into the calm but still foggy waters of the Groton Long Point Lagoon.

There are some tips I would like to leave with you after my experience of singlehanding in a fog:

Whenever sailing alone, fog or no, be sure to have everything you might need for navigating close at hand. This includes a chart of the local waters, a reliable compass, fog horn, depth sounder readout, anchor, and binoculars.

Always try to keep a constant running fix while underway. If this is not possible, be sure to get a definite fix before a fog closes in.

Learn how to keep a fog alert. Watch the horizon and don't be fooled like I was by thinking you could never have a fog move in if the wind speed was relatively high.

Use a depth sounder, if you have one. I also keep a lead line as an alternative. It's an excellent way to determine your position and to keep you off a rocky shore. Follow a fathom line or match readings with that of your chart.

Reduce sail for better boat control, especially if an appreciable breeze is blowing, and stay well off a lee shore.

Know your tides and currents. In actuality, most of us don't allow sufficiently for current set.

Anchor, if possible, until the fog lifts. If I weren't underway and in a channel much of the time I would have done better to wait out conditions.

Know the rules of the road including fog signals for your specific power or sailboat.

Don't panic. Go slowly, trust your instrumentation, and you'll get home safely.

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## Part 1: The Problem

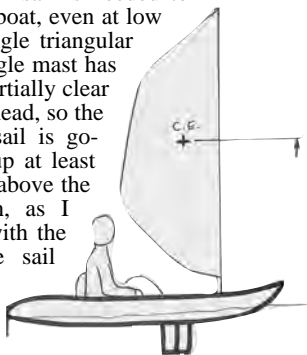
Although there are certainly lots of small boat and rig designs in the literature and on the market, I'm often motivated to try something different, both for the fun of the experiment and the chance of learning something new. I love trying to predict the behavior of a new design and have been hooked on playing with small boats for many years. Most of the time when my wife clears the breakfast table, there's already some barely decipherable quasi-scientific nautical sketch on my napkin or someplace nearby.

Our garage is full of small boats, boat parts, partial boat parts, and experimental partial boat parts. Oh, and some tools. I take off every ten days or so during the spring and summer to play with some new tweak or modification to a boat or rig over at Shoreline Lake or Redwood City Harbor on San Francisco Bay. Over the years I've designed/built several experimental small craft, some of which worked well (*Small Craft Advisor* Jan/Feb 2005) and some of which didn't exactly (nameless photos in my drawer), but all were at least a little bit outside the box and great fun to develop.

The problem I want to solve in this latest set of experiments might sound familiar to some of you. I'm at retirement age now (al-ready?) and I'm getting constructively lazy. I want a fun sailing experience in the smallest, lightest, most convenient package possible. Given that the garage seems to be shrinking lately, it would be wonderful if this new design combined the functions of an excellent kayak and an excellent sailboat together. Toward that goal, the first thing I did was to buy a used Hobie Mirage Sport kayak and get the sail kit for it. This is a great little boat, 9.5' long, about 55lbs, and in addition to normal paddling, it can be pedaled with the cool and unique Hobie Mirage fin drive. Adding the sail kit seemed to make it perfect.

As a kayak, it was really nice. Tracked well, medium fast, easy to handle, stable, rugged. As a sailboat it was nice up to about 8-9kts of wind and then it became aggravatingly unstable, as in really tippy. Hobie recommends it only for light winds. This makes sense, of course, because the hull is quite narrow for a sailboat at 29.5" and your behind is tucked down in the seat with very little room to move over to counterbalance the wind forces. Also, without a boom, the sail was an OK upwind performer but was somewhat of a slug downwind. I began to wonder how this could be improved. My thoughts soon focused on the Center of Effort of the sail. What if the CE could be brought down so the heeling force from the wind on the sail would not tip the hull so easily?

As a matter of physics, a minimum of about 20sf of sail is needed to power a 9' boat, even at low speed. A single triangular sail on a single mast has to at least partially clear the sailor's head, so the CE of the sail is going to end up at least 5.5' to 6.5' above the water which, as I had found with the stock Hobie sail kit, causes a lot of tipping moment on the narrow hull.



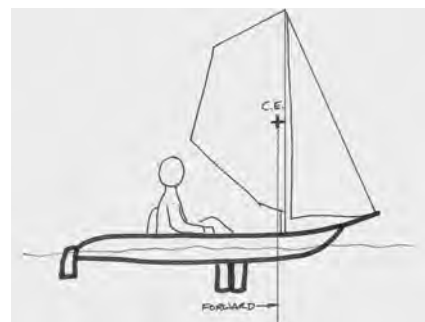
# Evolution of the Twinsail Rig

By Steve Curtiss

If two sails are used as a main and jib, the combined CE can be lower, but the CE will be located quite a ways forward on a kayak hull layout and the boat will have an unpleasant tendency to bear off.



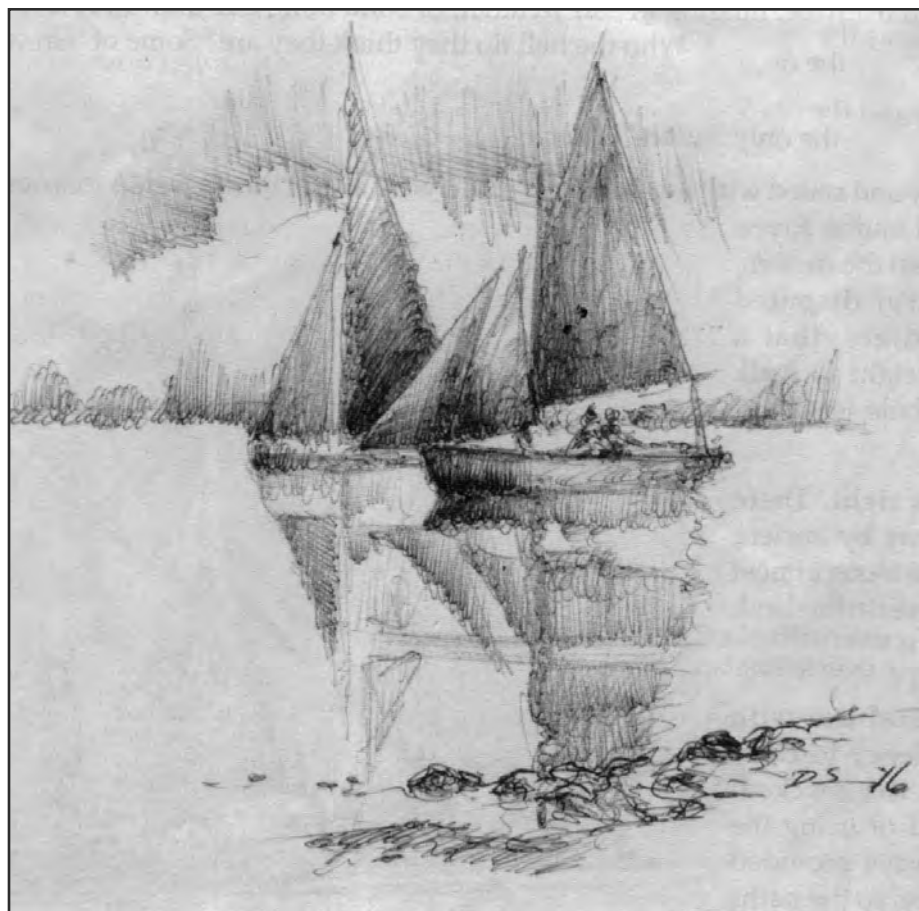
If two sails are used on two masts with the second sail sternward (like a canoe yawl), the combined CE is lower and at the correct location fore and aft, but handling two separate mast/boom/sail rigs in a stiff breeze is a tricky business better suited to folks who can balance a unicycle or ride a skateboard through a crowded parking lot while on the cell phone. My wife has reminded me on several occasions that I don't belong to this group.



There have been lots of experiments with solid wings and wing-shaped cloth foils, but the CE of these is generally up high again. I could add amas and akas (out-board hulls and cross beams) to balance the sail forces. These work well for expedition or longer range cruiser boats where safety, especially capsize prevention, is the primary concern. But I wanted something small, simple, and fun for an afternoon sail and didn't want to give up performance. In adding amas to the hull, friction is added as well and a design spiral can get started where the amas are added to balance the sail force, which slows the boat, then more sail area is added to overcome the ama friction, then larger or wider amas are added to balance the bigger sail force and so on. This is not a bad process in itself, resulting in some incredibly fast large trimarans prowling around these days, but I was after minimal size and minimal set-up.

So, after carefully looking at current and past rig technology I hadn't come up with anything that really seemed to solve the problem. Time to design something new!

Stay tuned for Part 2.





## Boat Building with Burnham Tackling a Massive Oak Log

By Harold Burnham  
[www.burnhamboatbuilding.com](http://www.burnhamboatbuilding.com)

Recently I tackled a massive white oak log that I wanted to cut and use for frame futtocks. The oak had a natural crux that is great for frame futtocks as it is so much stronger as the grain will follow the frame. It is not easy to get a log with that much curve in it from a regular sawyer. So I was particularly pleased with its curved lines. It took a total of about 45 minutes to get the log on the sawmill for cutting. I first used my chainsaw but then went to a sledgehammer and wedges for quite a while. All the while, the wood was making its own special crackling and squeaking sounds. Finally it split and I had it on the sawmill.



Fall has come to the Apalachee Bay area of the northern Gulf of Mexico. I lucked out and found the good weekend to work on the exterior of the boat. We joke that there are two weekends a year in our area (one in the spring and one in the fall) when the weather is perfect (not too hot, no rain, mild sun, and little wind) for exterior boat work. The rest of the year we cope with the environment.

I was not sailing our Puffin this year as I had hoped, so we sold the boat. The new owner put it in the water and went out to lead the other boats in the first race it was in. That showed it was the sailor and not the boat as I had followed the fleet in the few races in which I sailed that boat. A humbling experience when I see how well the boat does with a different skipper.

My Sisu 26 is "sort of" for sale and I have had someone "sort of" interested. My wife and I unloaded the boat to take some pictures of the inside. It is really amazing the amount of gear that finds its way into the boat over a year. I wrote a short piece on all the gear in a boat (published in the December 2008 issue, p.57) the last time I cleaned the boat out. One would think that such a situation would not happen again. However, I am back to sorting and storing elsewhere items not needed at the moment (eg, the race committee gear).

One of the last projects before the end of the year was to complete the installation of the new depth sounder unit. My two older units kept failing because the transducers would become covered with various marine growths (like barnacles on the transducer head). The last time the boat was out of the water for bottom cleaning and painting, I had the two through hull transducers removed and the holes filled. I then installed a new system at the stern of the

## From the Lee Rail

By C. Henry Depew

boat with the transducer on a sliding mount so it could be lifted out of the water when the boat was not being used. This arrangement worked, but the transducer wants to "float" when the boat is underway. Since I really need to know the water depth when going in (or out of) the channel at Shell Point and Panacea and I take those channels at slow/idle (about the same) speed, the depth sounder need to be working.

Out in the open water at 6kts (top speed), I am not too concerned about the depth of the water and I have found at the higher speeds, the transducer would need to be set lower on the transom to get a good reading. Hence, once I installed my mechanical "lock" on the transducer slide to keep the transducer in the water at low speed, I considered the project "complete."

The next to the last "to do" for 2009 was the replacement of the end gaskets on the engine heat exchanger. I had the manual for any project increases the chance that all would go as planned. When we purchased our 1973 Ford Mustang, I insisted on the shop manuals for the vehicle. The manual on the steering system was very helpful to the mechanic when the front end alignment had to be adjusted earlier this year.

I wish I could have found the manual for our Kenmore clothes dryer (some 37 years old) when I had to work on the bro-

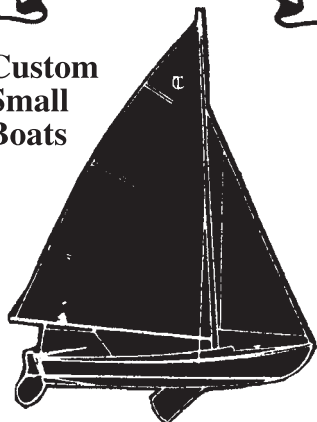
ken front door springs. Without the manual, taking things apart (and getting them back together again) becomes a bit tricky. Happily, the Kenmore people have a website with downloadable manuals for most of their products. I could not get the exact manual for the machine, but I got one "close enough" to see how to take the front off to replace the broken items.

My "final" 2009 project was to replace the DC-fuse/switch panel that came with the boat. It is so old that I can no longer find parts; I purchased a new six-switch panel and installed it. The first step was to label all the power lines so I replaced the proper wire(s) to the proper switch. The next step was to enlarge the opening for the higher panel. The width is OK, but the new panel is a bit "higher" than the old one. Careful work with a saber saw did the trick.

Writing about working on a boat reminded me of a trip last summer when my wife and I went to Maine to visit her sister and husband. While there, we were fortunate to visit the state museum in Augusta. While the display of a working water wheel driving devices and the history of Maine was most interesting, the section of a commercial sailing vessel and all the items that went into the construction of such a vessel was most informative. I am not sure if I would want to turn the brace driving a 2'-3' long bit for one of the bolts that held the ship together. One bolt every few feet makes for a lot of manually made holes in frames and hull material. I did not really understand why wrecked ships were "burnt for their iron" until I realized just how much iron (nails, bolts, nuts, washers, knee brace supports, etc) there was in the commercial sailing vessel.



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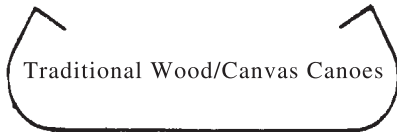
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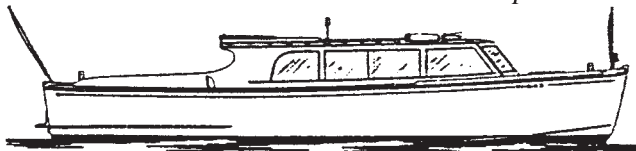


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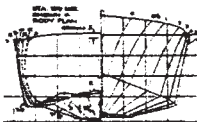
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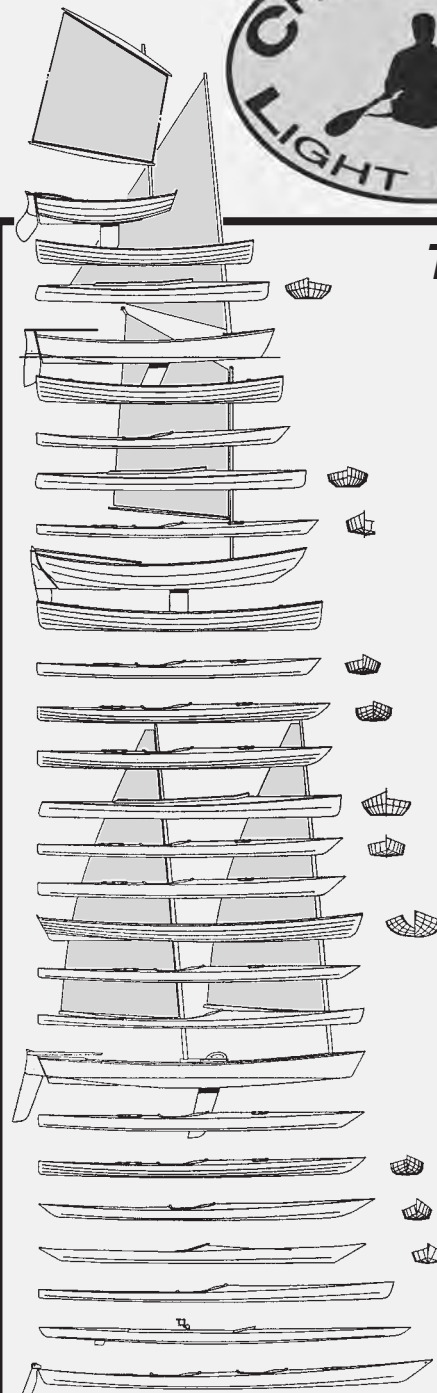
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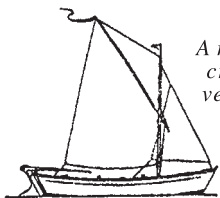
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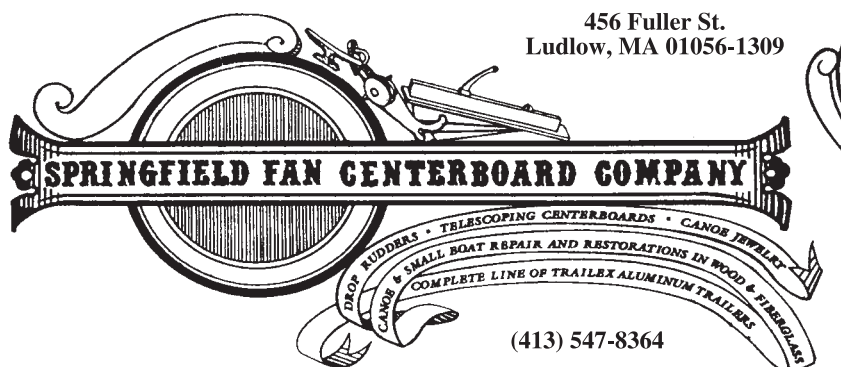
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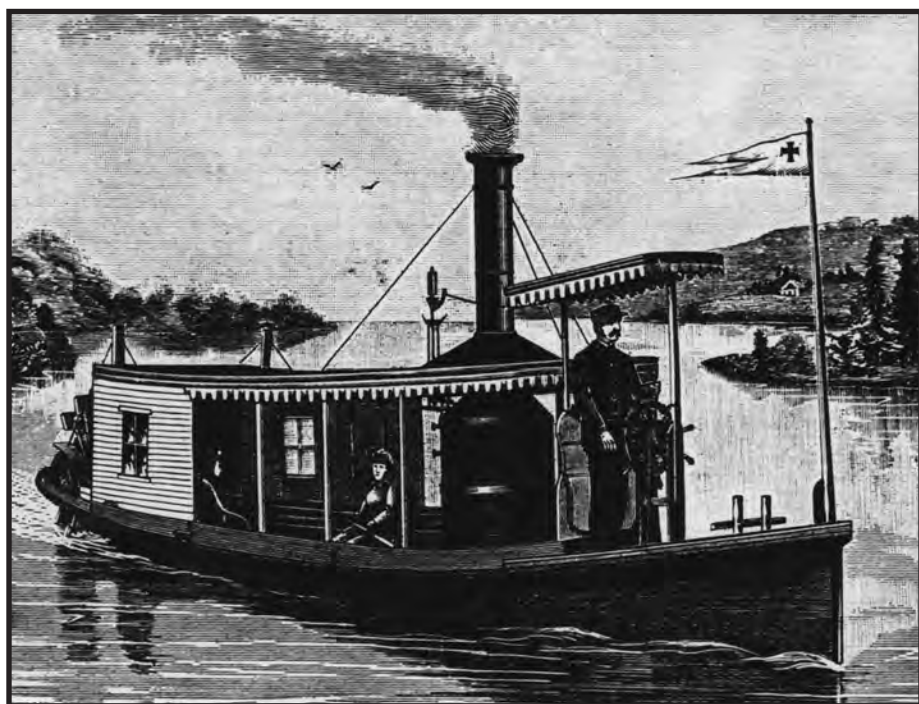
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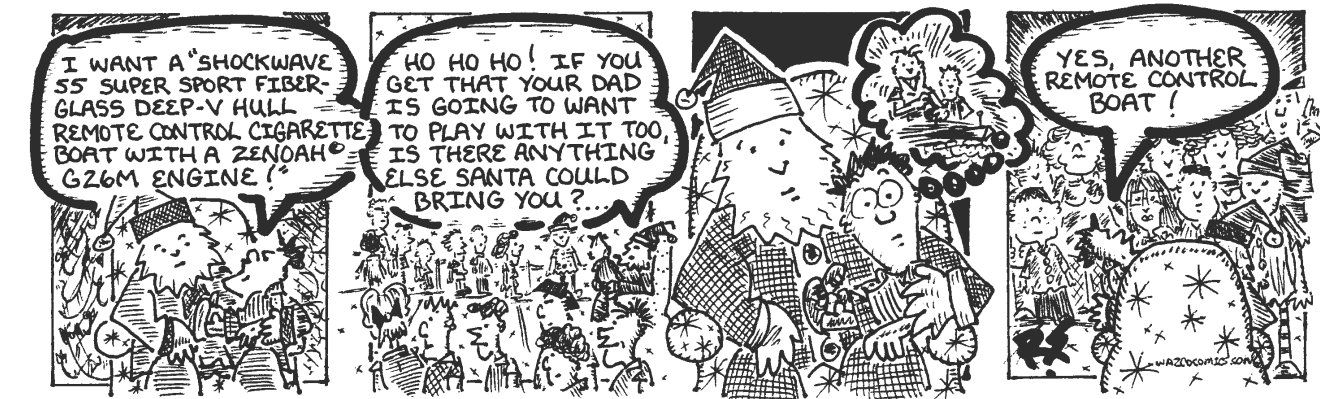
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